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OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

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DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA

ASSISTANT MANAGER—P. Gale, MHCIMA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

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BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

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ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

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HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent G. K. Dark

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 192**

THIRTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1990-91

House of Commons

Monday 3 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Death of a Member

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Eric Samuel Heffer, esquire, the Member for Liverpool, Walton, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Railway Construction, Scotland

1. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to avoid damage to Scottish industry and people resulting from delay in the construction of direct railway lines between Scotland and the continent for its goods and passengers.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The electrification of the east coast main line and the upgrading of routes between London and the channel tunnel will give Scotland excellent rail communications with the continent when the tunnel opens. British Rail's planned upgrading of the west coast main line would, in due course, further strengthen those links.

Mr. Wray: I cannot believe that the Minister gave that reply. Trains from London to Lille travel at 100 mph, yet those from London to Paris and from Glasgow to Paris travel at 65 mph. We want a TGV line from Glasgow to Paris. London is the only British city with a direct link to the continent. We should follow the example of the French, who are willing to spend £20 billion to increase the speed of the TGV train from 186 mph to 250 mph.

Mr. Rifkind: I must remind the hon. Gentleman that, apart from France, the United Kingdom has more high-speed trains than any country in the world. The electrification of the east coast main line from London to Edinburgh will be the largest single electrification or other railway project that British Rail has undertaken, and it will make a big contribution to improving the quality of travelling for the travelling public.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: When my right hon. and learned Friend considers direct links between Scotland and all parts of the United Kingdom and continental Europe will he take into account the benefits of using a route through Stratford in east London, which would avoid the bottleneck of central London and would provide fast traffic straight through for freight and passengers?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend may know, the recommendations that British Rail put to me recently for a high-speed link from the channel tunnel to London involved consideration of several routes, including the option that he suggested.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: As the Secretary of State is aware that only 23 per cent. of rail lines in Scotland are electrified, will he accept the strength of argument for electrification north of the central belt, especially as so many of our industries in the north-east and north of Scotland are export led?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Lady probably knows, I was pleased to be present last Thursday at the opening of the electrified InterCity line between Edinburgh and Glasgow. She will be aware that British Rail is holding discussions

with local authorities to see whether non-commercial benefits would flow from the electrification of northern routes.

London Underground

2. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much of London Underground's rolling stock in percentage terms has been brought into use in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): In the past year the public have not yet seen the benefits of the re-equipment programme. The first of the 85 new Central line trains will enter passenger service next spring and the first of the refurbished trains for the Bakerloo, Victoria, Circle and Hammersmith and City lines will enter service this July. Contracts have been let for more than two fifths of London Underground's trains to be replaced or completely modernised.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my hon. Friend for his support in getting the escalator at Greenford station back in action after it had been out of action for no fewer than seven months and for his admirable visit to Greenford.

Mr. Snape: That is another point in the polls.

Mr. Greenway: I thank the hon. Gentleman.

May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the anticipated report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on London Underground? Press reports say that it shows that much more money will be needed for infrastructure, such as new signalling, drains, gullies and track. He will receive strong support from Conservative Members in his battles with the Treasury to get that money, which London needs.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend's comments on my visit to Greenford. I am sure that he will be the first on the telephone if the escalator is not working at the station. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry must decide when to publish the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Investment in the underground, excluding the Jubilee line and the east-west crossrail, is around £400 million per annum. There is certainly justification for increasing that amount. During the coming public expenditure round, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will seriously consider what needs to be done.

Miss Hoey: The Minister may have helped the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) with his escalator problem, so would he like to visit Stockwell and Oval stations on the Northern line, where half the escalators have been out of action for a long time? Is it right that it should take a minimum of 16 weeks to fix an escalator? Would the hon. Gentleman like to give my area the prompt attention that he gave Ealing?

Mr. Freeman: I should be delighted to do that and to visit both stations. As the hon. Lady knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is a rail enthusiast and, in addition to travelling regularly on British Rail trains, he recently visited stations on the Northern line. I shall get in touch with the hon. Lady and we shall fix a date on which I shall visit those two stations.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Minister accept the description given by the chairman of London Transport that the underground is an appalling shambles and at least £10 billion is needed to produce acceptable standards? Does the hon. Gentleman accept the rumour that the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission makes it clear that there are inadequate finances for the London underground? If so, will the hon. Gentleman make a statement to the House before the summer so that we can offer some hope to those suffering misery on the London underground?

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will doubtless shortly publish the MMC's report on London Underground, and the hon. Gentleman should wait and read that document. The chairman of London Transport referred to a period going back many decades, during which there were both Labour and Conservative Governments.

Mr. Prescott: Is the chairman's statement true?

Mr. Freeman: There is no question but that the existing underground—setting on one side the mega-projects—is receiving substantial investment, but it needs more.

Canning Town (Railway)

3. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received for development of a new railway station at Canning Town.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a proposal from London Underground Ltd. for a station at Canning Town, which is included in the Bill for the Jubilee line extension which is currently before the House.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Minister aware of the sense of grievance in the east end of London because, compared with central and western London, we are often palmed off with what is second best and second rate, and that is threatening to happen again with the new station at Canning Town? I was told today that stations to the west on the Jubilee line are being designed by a firm of architects of international repute whereas stations to the east have been subcontracted out to a firm that no one has ever heard of. Is that true? Will the hon. Gentleman write to me about it? Finally——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question, please.

Mr. Leighton: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the design of Canning Town station is inferior? The hon. Gentleman was told that the cost of a decent, high-quality station would be an extra £40 million, whereas the Select Committee on Transport discovered that it would cost only an extra £8 million. Will the hon. Gentleman review the position with a view to giving us a decent station for the new railway line in the east end of London?

Mr. Freeman: Proceedings on the Jubilee line continue. My information is that the type of station that the hon. Gentleman and Newham want would cost an extra £7 million, which at the moment cannot be justified by the extra revenue that it would be likely to generate. It would involve putting the Northern line interchange at the same location as the docklands light railway and Jubilee line interchanges. The hon. Gentleman said that his area gets

second best. Not only is the docklands light railway being upgraded, but the Jubilee line extension to Stratford is a massive investment in, commitment to and support for the east end of London.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister recall his visit to Canning Town station and to my constituents when he and I walked the tracks together? Is he aware of the importance of the interchange between the docklands light railway on the docklands north bank and the Jubilee line on the south bank? The lines cross at Canning Town, as does the north London link, which he mentioned. Why should we have a second-class station there, where interchanging will be difficult? Does not a second-class station imply that the Government think that the inhabitants of Canning Town and the Beckton docklands area are second-class citizens?

Mr. Freeman: I remember my visit to Canning Town station with the hon. Gentleman. It seemed that the interchange between the docklands light railway and the Jubilee line at Canning Town was satisfactory and was in no sense a second-class station. I shall write to him and to his colleague, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), about the architect who is designing the station. It is true that passengers will have to pass through a tunnel to get to the north London line interchange, but to have all three lines intersecting with interconnecting platforms would cost an extra £7 million. At this stage, at least, the hon. Gentleman advances no justification for spending that extra money.

Dartford (Bridge)

4. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the name of the bridge currently under construction over the Thames at Dartford; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): No decision has yet been taken on a name for the new bridge.

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend will appreciate my disappointment with his answer. Will he confirm that the bridge will be named after neither Dartford nor Thurrock? Will he also pay tribute to all the men and women who have worked so hard to make the bridge a reality in north-west Kent?

Mr. Chope: I am happy to pay tribute to all the people who have worked on the construction of the bridge and to those who have been lobbying for it to be given one name or another. My hon. Friend is speculating and I could not possibly confirm or deny what he is saying.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend accept that the one person to be neutral was the Chairman of the parliamentary Committee which sat for many weeks to discuss the matter and that, in tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), who has now gone into the silence of the Whips Office, perhaps the bridge should be called Sydney's bridge?

Mr. Chope: That is a novel suggestion which will be taken into account in the coming weeks.

British Rail (Customer Service)

5. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to bring forward proposals which would compensate British Rail passengers for poor standards of customer service.

Mr. Rifkind: We are actively pursuing, in co-operation with British Rail, a number of ways in which a higher quality of service can be encouraged and rewarded. As part of this process, we are examining how the interests of passengers can be promoted and protected.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to the Secretary of State and heartily welcome his enthusiasm for rail transport. Will he share the misery of commuters from my constituency who suffer from the lack of announcements by British Rail, delays, a complete lack of punctuality and of facilities at stations and from problems of overcrowding caused because trains are not of the right length? They face all those problems, yet, as season ticket holders, they receive no compensation except through the minor and almost secret system of ex gratia payments which British Rail has introduced under the counter. Will he put the matter in the public domain and force British Rail to provide compensation to passengers if they suffer from the inadequacies of the current level of service and if British Rail simply fails to perform?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend rightly says, there is an ex gratia payments scheme currently operated by British Rail, which last year paid out about £2·5 million to passengers who suffered from various inconveniences. My hon. Friend is right to refer to the need to consider extending facilities for passengers who have been gravely inconvenienced, not simply on the railways but in other areas. They are matters that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said would be the subject of the citizens' charter proposals which are being considered.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that if compensation were allocated, British Rail, on its present standing, would lose about £270 million? If so, would not it also be true that the people of Kent and East Anglia would no longer have to pay rail fares?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should not assume that press speculation is necessarily valid. Clearly, the level of compensation paid would depend on the criteria for entitlement to it, which are still to be considered. France is often given as an example of a country where compensation is paid to passengers. However, if one examines that idea in detail, one finds that TGV passengers receive compensation only if the train is more than three hours late. Therefore, the sums involved tend to be rather small.

Mr. Moate: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Kent commuters in particular are entitled to a better standard of service and that the greatest improvement could be secured if he would approve soon the investment in the new Networker Express programme for the Kent coast? Do his new-found expressions of enthusiasm for rail investment include an early announcement of the 741 Networker Express programme for the Kent coast?

Mr. Rifkind: I can tell my hon. Friend that there are various ways in which Kent railway services have been

improved in the recent past and, no doubt, will be improved in the weeks and months to come. I cannot make a specific announcement today on the project to which my hon. Friend referred. However, I appreciate the importance attached by Kent commuters to improvement of that service.

Mr. Prescott: May I refer the Secretary of State, in his considerations of ideas for the citizens' charter, to his copy of "Moving Britain into the 1990s", which details the things that need to be done? That would continue the plagiarism of Labour's policies. Will he seriously consider repealing the conditions of carriage for British Rail, bringing in a detailed pricing policy for British Rail, assessing whether the Government have given sufficient financial resources to British Rail to enable it to meet the standards that he wishes to impose on it, and setting up an independent regulatory body to ensure that such standards are confirmed and carried out?

Mr. Rifkind: Those tempted by Labour's proposals for railways for the next Parliament will wish to reflect on what the previous Labour Government did. They will recall that investment in the railways fell each year between 1975 and 1979. They will be reminded that there was a net closure of railway lines—more railway lines closed than were opened during the period of the last Labour Government—whereas in the past 12 years, there has been a net increase in the rail network. They will also applaud the fact that under this Conservative Government no fewer than 163 railway stations have either been opened or reopened since 1979.

Ports Industry

6. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of efficiency of the ports industry.

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): There has been a marked increase in productivity at many ports since the abolition of the dock labour scheme, with increased scope for investment. I expect further advances as a result of the privatisation of leading trust ports under the Ports Bill which is now before Parliament.

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Does he agree that since the abolition of the national dock labour scheme there have been dramatic improvements in efficiency and productivity in the docks? That must have substantially benefited our export trade. Bearing in mind that some people regarded the national dock labour scheme as the jewel in the crown of the special relationship between the Labour party and the trade union movement, has my hon. Friend had many demands for the reintroduction of the national dock labour scheme?

Mr. McLoughlin: We have had no demands from the industry or from the people who work in the docks, although I understand that the Opposition are considering whether they should reimpose such a scheme, which would only damage the port industry.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Why do the Government support the European Community's proposals to downgrade the port of Stranraer, not to proceed with making the railway line in western Scotland more efficient, and to divert cross-Irish sea transport to Fishguard?

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made a speech about the importance that the Government attach to freight and to attempting to move freight by rail. I will ensure that the right hon. Gentleman receives a full reply about Northern Ireland ports.

Ms. Walley: Why does there continue to be so little reference to the role of ports and shipping in an integrated transport infrastructure? Why do the Government measure everything in terms of efficiency rather than dovetailing our ports into the transport policy that we should have? Does the Minister accept that the trust ports already compete with the private sector? Why has he forced through reserve powers to sell off trust ports? Is not the Government's treatment of trust ports proof that neither the nation's health nor its transport is safe in their hands?

Mr. McLoughlin: What we have just heard from the Opposition is that they will pay no attention to efficiency but will be concerned only with bureaucratic planning of transport. We do not feel that that is the most appropriate way in which to develop transport policy. We shall concentrate on efficiency because we believe that that will bring greater opportunities to our ports industry. It has been pointed out that the powers for privatisation are reserve powers and will be used only after consultation with the ports. We believe that the trust ports will be far better served in the private sector. Indeed, a number of ports eagerly await the passage of the Bill so that they can move into the private sector.

Channel Tunnel

7. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the preferred route for the new channel tunnel rail link between London and the North Downs.

8. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on British Rail's proposals for a high-speed rail link through south-east London and Kent.

Mr. Rifkind: We are considering British Rail's report and recommendations for the rail link carefully. It is too early to say when decisions may be announced.

Ms. Ruddock: Is it not remarkable that in his recent speech of enlightenment, supposedly signalling his conversion to rail, the Secretary of State devoted but a single sentence to the passenger rail link from the channel tunnel? Is that because he is deeply embarrassed about this long-running fiasco? Will he accept from me that he cannot delay further, that he should clearly announce that he has abandoned any consideration of a route through south London and that he will do the decent thing and look for an alternative that links Stratford and King's Cross?

Mr. Rifkind: As the recommendations from British Rail landed on my desk only a couple of weeks ago, it would have been remarkable if I had given them more than one sentence of consideration in a speech made last week. It is precisely because we wish to consider all the implications,

including the points raised by the hon. Lady, that it will take a little time to come to a judgment and a conclusion. That is what we are doing at present.

Mr. Arnold: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that my constituents in north-west Kent have had to put up with three years of blight, as four of the routes under consideration cross my constituency. Is he also aware that even more than a rapid decision, we want a right decision which properly takes into account the environmental considerations, because in north-west Kent we have nothing to gain in transport terms and a large amount to lose in terms of our environment?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct to emphasise the importance of the environmental implications for Kent of whatever decision is reached. British Rail itself has said that if it is given approval to go ahead, its next step will be to consider a full environmental assessment of whatever turns out to be the preferred route.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not a fact that the Secretary of State is trying to work out a route that somehow avoids every marginal Conservative constituency in south-east London? Does he intend to make an announcement before the summer recess or is he hanging on for an election? If he is, we could be waiting an awfully long time for that decision.

Mr. Rifkind: I am touched by the hon. Gentleman's concern. However, he will appreciate that when a report that is 12 inches thick has been presented, he would be the first to criticise if we leapt to conclusions on it. We shall reach a decision and announce it when we have considered British Rail's recommendations and given them the proper attention that they require.

Mr. Barry Field: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House that when he considers the route through south London, he will do nothing to exacerbate the practice at Lymington of British Rail trains leaving just before the ferry docks from the Isle of Wight rather than just after, as that is a continual irritation to my constituents?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is that towards the North Downs?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not certain whether that is towards the North Downs, Mr. Speaker, but we shall certainly draw to the attention of British Rail what appears to be a lack of co-ordination in the service available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Before making his decision would not the Secretary of State be well advised to put out for consultation whatever recommendation he has received from British Rail? He will well remember that when his predecessor received the last report and an announcement was made to the public, there was a huge outcry, including from his own colleagues? Are not the route, and the need to pay for the environmental consequences of whichever route is chosen, matters on which consultation is needed and on which wise and careful decisions must be made —not least, if I may say so respectfully, for the sake of the Secretary of State's colleagues, who risk a great deal if he makes the wrong decision?

Mr. Rifkind: The principle of what the hon. Gentleman says cannot be questioned, and nor would I seek to do so. The important point, which I made a few moments ago, is that British Rail is not asking for a final decision at this stage. It seeks approval to go ahead with a full environmental assessment of its preferred route. That will, indeed, involve a substantial degree of public consultation to take into account the points raised by not only the hon. Gentleman but my hon. Friends.

Passenger Safety

9. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been carried out by or on behalf of his Department on the advisability of segregating drivers and passengers from vehicles *(a)* transported by ship or hovercraft and *(b)* transported by rail.

Mr. Freeman: For the channel tunnel car-carrying shuttles the plan is that drivers and passengers should stay in or very close to their cars. Eurotunnel believes that this procedure will be safe and the speediest way of unloading cars. The independent Anglo-French safety authority has said that it is satisfied with this system in principle, but that it wants further research to continue.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the main reasons why occupants are separated from their vehicles on passenger ferries is the danger of the occasional spontaneous combustion of a vehicle? Does he therefore understand the concern about what would happen should that occur when passengers are inside their vehicles in enclosed carriages on a train in the channel tunnel? Can he assure us that research has been undertaken that will set people's minds at rest? Will he ensure that such research is published so that the public can be satisfied?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this important issue. I assure him that research will continue and I will ensure that the House is informed of its conclusions before the channel tunnel service opens. The difference between cars being parked on the lower deck of a ferry and on the car-carrying shuttles going through the channel tunnel is that the cars on the shuttle will be in containers in which no more than five cars can be parked on any one deck. To that extent, the risk of fire is contained.

I understand my hon. Friend's concern and I will ensure that the results of the research are published.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise the growing concern, especially among families with young children, that there will be dangers in travelling through the channel tunnel in trains and in being confined to compartments, particularly if delays occur in the tunnel? Is it not time for serious consideration to be given to that and for alternative proposals to be forthcoming?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that Eurotunnel will consider whatever sensible and practical alternatives are available. Recently, I had the pleasure and privilege of travelling through the channel tunnel—I think that I was the first Minister, either French or British, to do so. The journey took four and a half hours on one of the construction trains, but it will take around 30 minutes for the shuttles to travel between Folkestone and Calais underneath the channel. Passengers will be able to get out of their cars and travel from one vehicle to the next, but they will not be able to travel the entire length of the train. It remains to be seen whether passengers are prepared to accept this, but the Government firmly believe that the channel tunnel service will be a success.

Mr. Wolfson: When my hon. Friend publishes the results of the research will he include comparisons with the European experience of long-tunnel train travel where people remain, with safety, in their vehicles?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, I am sure that we shall do so. Those on the Opposition Front Bench have been pressing my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on the rail link. I am sure that the House will realise that as and when a rail link is built the amount of travel in tunnels—under the channel, through the north and south Downs and under the metropolis—will be considerable, whatever route is chosen. The experience of rail passengers travelling through long tunnels, especially in Japan, will be relevant.

"A Bus Strategy for London"

10. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses he has received to his consultation paper entitled, "A Bus Strategy for London".

Mr. Freeman: We are continuing to receive official responses to our consultation paper "A Bus Strategy for London" and to date more than 200 have been received. I am not sure whether we have received one from the hon. Gentleman. The Government believe that a deregulated rather than centrally planned bus service in London will encourage more and varied services, so offering the best chance of increasing bus patronage.

Mr. Cohen: Does the Minister admit that he is riding along with deregulation in the bus strategy? When it has been adopted outside London, has not that meant 16 per cent. fewer buses? That would be a disaster for traffic in London. It might mean more buses in the rush hour but fewer, or perhaps none, off peak. Would not the quality of the bus fleet go down? Would not concessionary fares for pensioners and the travel card be placed at risk or be referred to the Office of Fair Trading? Does not that show that the Government are unsafe to steer London buses?

Mr. Freeman: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has his figures muddled. Since deregulation, figures for bus services outside London show an increase of about one fifth in the number of bus miles offered to passengers. There are more services by minibuses, double deckers, and coaches. The Government want to ensure that London has the same benefits—more bus miles offered to passengers —so that we can encourage more passengers onto the buses and thereby help to relieve congestion.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree, none the less, that the experience of transport planning, here and in other countries, suggests that something less than full deregulation may be appropriate to the capital city? Will he bear in mind that need to compromise?

Mr. Freeman: We are still receiving consultation responses, including the contribution from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). The Government have not reached a final decision on the format of deregulation. However, the central principle is clear. It divides the Opposition from the Government because we believe in a substantially deregulated market. More buses would come into London to offer their services, which would, hopefully, mean more passengers on the buses——

Mr. Prescott: What do the passengers think?

Mr. Freeman: I shall not be drawn into making a riposte. The Government believe strongly that, the more buses that are provided and offered to customers in London, the more people will travel on them and the less congested our roads will become.

Railway Industry, York

12. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to make an official visit to York to inspect the railway industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: I visited York on 14 January to launch the new diesel express class of 158 units on the transpennine route. A total of 128 of these units are being introduced on regional railways. They will make a significant improvement to regional railway services. I hope to visit York on 27 June to attend a meeting of the North Eastern transport users' consultative committee.

Mr. Gregory: I am delighted by the regularity with which my hon. Friend visits York. I hope that he will encourage my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to visit, not only to see the new headquarters of British Rail Freight but to take the opportunity to explain to British Rail employees the advantages of denationalisation. Will he make clear to them that they would benefit from share ownership in much the same way as their brothers and sisters in British Rail Engineering Ltd.?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State would welcome the opportunity to visit York to explain the advantages of privatising British Rail.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When the Minister visits York, will he talk to the workers of BREL, who will explain to him how those of them who have been there for 25 or 26 years are losing their redundancy terms each year that they retain their membership of the new company, while new directors are being given enormous benefits? Will the Minister try to understand that, far from being an advantage to workers, privatisation will mean enormous job losses, worse conditions and much lower redundancy payments when employees lose their jobs?

Mr. McLoughlin: I need not go to York to meet workers of BREL because I often meet them in my constituency. We believe that they are in a far better position in a privatised company than they would have been, had the company continued to be a subsidiary of British Rail, and most of the workers believe that, too.

Light Rapid Transit Systems

13. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is Government policy on assistance for further light rapid transit systems.

Mr. Freeman: We are prepared to grant-aid worthwhile light rail schemes subject to the availability of resources. In the past two years we have approved Manchester metro link at £120 million and South Yorkshire supertram at £230 million.

Mr. Mitchell: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the considerable benefits that will accrue to my constituents and the many other people who live in the greater Nottingham area from a Nottingham LRT? Will he also

bear in mind that the project being developed there represents genuine participation between the private and the public sectors, which deserves full Government support, not only after a Bill is put before the House but, before that, during the project's development?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We welcome the participation of the private sector in transport schemes—for example, the docklands light railway and the Jubilee line. The light rail schemes, in Nottingham and Bristol, are to be welcomed. They ensure that projects funded by the public purse are much more likely to proceed.

Mr. Snape: Given the Secretary of State's recent and much-publicised conversion to the principle of support for public transport, particularly rail, would it not be a good idea for him to implement what are at present only ideas and give the go ahead to the midland metro? That would contribute enormously to the reduction of congestion in the Birmingham-West Bromwich-Wolverhampton corridor.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support for that scheme. His views sit uncomfortably with those expressed by his colleague, the shadow spokesman for transport, on light rail schemes in general. The Government believe that once exercises are concluded on sensible propositions—including, on the face of it, the one for the west midlands—and if resources are available, they will be funded.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Visit

28. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy to discuss with tenants the income of the Duchy.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I very much look forward to my next visit to the Duchy. However I do not expect to discuss Duchy income levels with tenants.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that, at a time of steadily reducing interest rates, tenants in the Duchy who are small business owners are faced with increases in the amount they have to pay for bank loans? Has my right hon. Friend received any representations on that matter from tenants in the Duchy? Does he have any ideas to put before the House, now or in future, that might alleviate the problems of small businesses?

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's views to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was able to offer a few views on that important subject on a well-known television programme yesterday morning. I am sure that my right hon. Friend, were he at the Dispatch Box, would say that in the implausible event of a Labour Government, interest rates would be a great deal higher due to the risk premium of socialist policies.

29. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next proposes to visit the Duchy on official business.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans to visit the Duchy estates in the immediate future.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. When he draws up his programme for future visits to the Duchy, will he specifically include a visit to Ribble Valley and, once there, judge the extent—although I accept that it will be extremely difficult for him—to which voters are more aware of Liberal Democrat policies?

Mr. Patten: As my hon. Friend knows from his successful experience in Chelmsford, very few people seem to know what Liberal Democrat policies amount to, as that party customarily stands for a sort of a sanctimonious popularism, which means that its members are in favour of whatever they think is immediately popular on the side of town where they are standing for office. I hope that more people in the Ribble Valley, as elsewhere in the country, will now know that two things for which the Liberals certainly stand are higher income tax and a 50 per cent. cut in our defence programme.

Dr. Cunningham: When the Chancellor of the Duchy goes to the north-west, will he accept that people there are far more at risk from the failed policies of the Conservative Government than from anything that the Liberal Democrats may have to offer? Will he tell those in the north-west—the 8,000 people who lost their jobs in April alone, the 745 companies which went into liquidation in the first three months of this year and the 606 companies that went bankrupt this year—whether he shares the view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that that is a price well worth paying?

Mr. Patten: I would certainly point out to anyone in the north-west to whom I was fortunate enough to speak that there had been a 16 per cent. increase in the number of businesses in the north-west since 1979. I should also point out that unemployment would be higher if there were such a thing as a Labour Government, because of the national minimum wage—a well known fact. I would also point out that interest rates would be higher because of the risk premium of a Labour Government, and that taxes on everyone would be a great deal higher too.

30. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to visit the Duchy to meet tenants and employees to discuss the taxation and income of the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall be meeting Duchy tenants next month, although, as I said earlier, I do not envisage discussing taxation or Duchy income levels.

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. When next he has a chance to move as a popular Chancellor among his grateful tenantry does he anticipate receiving from them expressions of concern of the sort that I receive in my constituency about the fact that it is now official Labour party policy to cut defence expenditure by about £9 billion—and that that is likely to cost thousands of jobs, including thousands of jobs in Lancashire?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is of course entirely correct to point out that Labour party conferences have consistently voted for cuts of one third in our defence budget. I understand that they would amount to about £9 billion. We know very well that Labour's cuts in our

conventional defences, as well as its unilateralism, would lead to job-cuts in the north-west and elsewhere in the country and to the undermining of our security.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Certification Audits

38. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how many certification audits were carried out by the National Audit Office in each of the past two years.

Sir Peter Hordern (on behalf of the Public Accounts Commission): The National Audit Office certified 466 accounts in 1989-90, and 463 in 1990-91.

Mr. Banks: The National Audit Office is obviously working hard and extremely efficiently, and on behalf of the whole House we should like to thank it. Am I correct in saying that it also examined the social security accounts, paying particular attention to computer technology and the assessment of income support? Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the great deal of suffering that underestimating or overestimating income support calculations inflicts on the clients of the DSS? Will he have a gentle word in the ear of the Comptroller and Auditor General and suggest that he looks again at the use of computers in the Department and perhaps that he comes to my constituency, to the DSS office at Jubilee house, to see how inefficiently the computer system there is operated?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am sure that the Comptroller and Auditor General does examine the accounts to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. However, these matters are more properly within the province of the Public Accounts Committee than within that of the Public Accounts Commission; but I am quite certain that the Comptroller and Auditor General will take note of what has been said.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the recommendations of the Procedure Committee, which I strongly oppose, to widen the remit of the National Audit Office so that it has to report to Select Committees will prejudice the work done by the NAO on certification and the relationship that it has with Government Departments, which is very much based on trust? That trust might be endangered if the work of the NAO is drawn into the political haranguing that may sometimes occur in Select Committees.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Public Accounts Commission has not yet considered that matter, although we may do so. I should greatly regret anything that diminished the authority or role of the Comptroller and Auditor General or the close association that he has with the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Soames: Will my hon. Friend pass on to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the National Audit Office the gratitude of the whole House for the excellent work that the organisation undertakes? Does he agree that by the structure and content of its reports the NAO has greatly increased, through the clarity of its presentation, the information available to ordinary Members of this House?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, as I am sure the Comptroller and Auditor General will be. I shall pass on my hon. Friend's remarks.

Dr. Kim Howells: Given the precedent set by the investigations of the National Audit Office into the financial consequences of the sale of the Rover car company, will the NAO be able to examine the results of the horse trading that is taking place to try to capture the Channel 3 franchises of television companies?

Sir Peter Hordern: That will not be a matter for the Public Accounts Commission. I am sure that the Comptroller and Auditor General will examine anything which the hon. Gentleman may care to put to him. I have no authority in the matter.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Income

31. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to visit the Duchy to discuss the income levels of the Duchy.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs).

Mr. Arnold: If my right hon. Friend were to discuss the income levels of the people of the Duchy, would he consider with them the advantages of a Government who have cut personal taxation and who will do so again when that is prudent? Would he compare that Government with a Government formed by the Labour party, the Opposition? Previous Labour Administrations have increased taxation, and a Labour Government would do so again.

Mr. Patten: The other day the Leader of the Opposition said that no one could look to a Labour Government, were there to be one, for tax cuts. I think that that was the understatement of the decade. Under a Labour Government, tax would increase for everyone in work, for all savers, for the thrifty and for the enterprising.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Facilities

39. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to extend public facilities in the Palace of Westminster.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The relevant Services sub-committees are currently considering measures to improve further access for disabled visitors and the feasibility of providing refreshments for all visitors in advance of whatever may be included in the design brief for phase 2 of the new parliamentary building.

Mr. Banks: Does the Lord President share my understanding that having a cream tea with a Member on the Terrace is one of the high spots of the London season? It is certainly one of the lesser injuries that we can inflict upon our constituents. Given the appalling weather at present and the tight-fistedness of many hon. Members, it

is clear that a cream tea is not one of the pleasures that many constituents can enjoy. Could not we have a boat moored off the Thames on which refreshments are provided? It would—*[Interruption.]* This is a serious point. Such a boat would enable members of the public to enjoy the views that we have. Refreshments could be offered not in phase 2 but in the Palace of Westminster itself, perhaps by using Westminster Hall. We are very ready to take hospitality in this place but reluctant to offer it.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not often have cream teas and I rather welcome the rain because we are badly in need of it.

It is generally agreed that it is not possible to provide refreshments for visitors in the Palace itself. I doubt whether Westminster Hall would be an appropriate place for the provision of refreshments. The Catering sub-committee has agreed to commission a feasibility study to determine whether reasonable facilities that are conveniently close to the House can be provided for groups of Members' guests. I know of one location that is being included in the study, and I shall ask the sub-committee to consider the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Recycled Paper

40. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether there are any proposals to produce the *Official Report* on recycled paper.

Mr. MacGregor: This matter was considered by the Accommodation and Administration sub-committee during the previous Session.

The Committee agreed with advice given by Her Majesty's Stationery Office that recycled paper was currently unsuitable for use in producing parliamentary publications, including the *Official Report*, largely due to the poor archival qualities of this type of paper.

Mr. Butler: I understand the need to retain some *Hansards* for archival purposes, but most daily reports and most Order Papers are put into the rubbish bin at the end of the day. Is there not a case for reconsidering the use of recycled paper for those parliamentary papers?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that some libraries use copies of the daily *Official Report* and other volumes for archival purposes. I take my hon. Friend's point about Vote Papers and Vote bundles. I would guess that they are not used often for archival purposes. I am happy to ask the relevant Committee to take up the matter again and to consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. I am strongly in favour of using recycled paper whenever that is possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that helpful reply, but two further developments would be welcome. First, will he try to ensure that the amount of paper produced in the House—much of which is wasted internally, let alone externally—is reduced? There is considerable scope, especially in view of the amount of paper left at the end of every day and bundled up in the Vote Office.

Secondly, we are to some extent using recycled paper for correspondence. It is only woodcuts—offcuts—not properly recycled paper. Can we go the whole hog and have fully recycled paper?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall see that the hon. Gentleman's point is considered. As for his first, I share his view that wherever possible we should cut down on the amount of paper that we use. I have often thought that we use far too much in the Vote bundle. The Procedure Committee has examined the matter and made some helpful recommendations. I am keen that it should do more, as I suggested when I met the Committee recently.

Most of the paper that goes into the wastepaper baskets in the House is sent for recycling. Nevertheless, I agree that it is our responsibility to cut down on paper whenever possible.

Official Envelopes

42. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to extend the eligibility of House post-paid envelopes for use by an hon. Member writing to overseas constituents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans to do so. However, my hon. Friend may be aware that the Services Committee has recently approved the use of post-paid envelopes to certain official destinations in Europe and this facility will be available to hon. Members in June.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. I remind him that there are now 400,000 overseas constituents with whom hon. Members need to communicate. I am in constant communication with several of mine. Many of them live beyond the territories of Europe. Is my right hon. Friend aware that they like to receive House of Commons envelopes with the proper embossed heading? Will he find some way of enabling hon. Members to use those envelopes for communications with their overseas constituents?

Mr. MacGregor: It took some time to establish the arrangement that I have just described for certain European destinations, involving an embossed stamp. My hon. Friend has anticipated me. I was going to remind him that for overseas correspondence concerning parliamentary or constituency business hon. Members may use the normal postage stamps and reclaim the cost from the Fees Office against the office cost allowance. That is one possibility open to my hon. Friend, and he can also use House of Commons envelopes for that purpose even if they are not stamped.

Petitions

43. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to introduce a procedure whereby an official response would be presented in respect of all parliamentary public petitions.

Mr. MacGregor: No, Sir.

Mr. Cohen: Does the Lord President realise that more than 900 official petitions submitted last year received the response from the Government, "There is no Government response"? They were not ordinary street-corner petitions; people had to go through a detailed rigmarole to present them to the House. The Government are undermining the British people's traditional right to present a petition to

the House. I would have put this complaint in a petition, but I feared that I would receive the reply, "There is no response".

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is getting a response from me now. Part of the answer is that there are other ways in which constituents' requests—petitions, ideas and views—can receive Government answers, including the usual means of parliamentary questions. The hon. Gentleman is not quite right. The Government gave their observations on 170 of the 960 petitions in the previous Session. Not all petitions are addressed to the Government; they are effectively addressed to the House. I think that it is right to follow the normal practices.

New Parliamentary Buildings

44. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on progress on phases 1 and 2 of the new parliamentary buildings.

Mr. MacGregor: Phase 1 is now being fitted out and furnished. The part of the building occupied by the House of Commons Library, known as 1 Derby Gate, will open to Members on Monday 17 June. The catering facilities and Members' offices in phase 1 will be ready when the House returns from its summer adjournment. The Services Committee has agreed its initial brief for phase 2 and will report on this shortly to the House. It is hoped that construction work can begin in spring 1992 and the building be ready for occupation in 1996.

Mr. Coombs: I thank my right hon. Friend for that helpful answer. In view of the increasing number of right hon. and hon. Members who will use the accommodation in those two phases, as well as Norman Shaw North and South, will he tell us what is the latest thinking on the provision of a secure access from those buildings into the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. MacGregor: There will be new security arrangements for those buildings and that will apply immediately in phase 1. Direct secure access to the House from both will have to await completion of phase 2 in respect of completely secure access. The intention is to have secure access when phase 2 is completed.

Dr. Cunningham: Is not progress on providing new and better facilities painfully slow? Does the Leader of the House recognise that an interim solution might be to rent or lease space in existing buildings in the vicinity of the Palace of Westminster? In that regard, would he bring into use the building on the other side of Westminster bridge which was the former headquarters of the Greater London council? That building could be put to effective use for hon. Members, their staff and visitors. Would he also bring that building into a proper state of maintenance so that a a new London authority can reoccupy when we have a Labour Government?

Mr. MacGregor: First, as the hon. Gentleman knows, I am as keen as anyone to see progress on the provision of better facilities for hon. Members. There will be 65 Members offices in phase 1 which is coming in shortly. There will be another 25 Members offices as the Serjeant at Arms, the deputy Serjeant at Arms and Mr. Speaker's secretary vacate their present residences. That is a step forward.

To some extent phase 2 is involved with the Jubilee line and the changes to Westminster tube station for which a Bill is currently before the House. That complicates the issue. However, that is moving ahead and we are looking at alternative arrangements for moving people out as the changes take place from existing buildings across the road in Bridge street and also more generally. As the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is aware, I am currently considering additional facilities in the nearby vicinity. I do not believe that county hall is appropriate and I would certainly not be happy to see money spent to facilitate the return of the GLC which is the last thing we want for London.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short statement about the subjects for debate on Wednesday and Friday of this week.

WEDNESDAY 5 JUNE—Opposition day (12th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock, there will be a debate entitled "The government of London", followed by a debate entitled "Training cuts and the unemployed". Both debates arise on Opposition motions.

FRIDAY 7 JUNE—There will be a debate entitled "Nationalisation, denationalisation and renationalisation", on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

In addition, at the end of tomorrow, there will be Ways and Means resolutions relating to the Finance Bill.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for that statement. It is helpful to the House to know the subjects for debate on Wednesday, as they could not be announced before the recess. When the Minister replies to the debate on London, will we hear whether the Government have any policies or ideas for the better government of our capital city? Is it too much to hope that, in the second half of our Supply day on Wednesday, we shall have an explanation from the Ministers about the disastrous and inexorable increases in unemployment, and discover whether they share the view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the disastrous level of unemployment is "a price worth paying"?

Mr. MacGregor: With regard to the first debate, I am sure that my hon. Friend who will deal with the debate will make clear the Government's constructive policies for London—which will not, unlike the Opposition's policies, include the return of the unlamented Greater London council.

The second debate is fundamentally about training. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend who will speak in that debate will make clear the much greater expenditure on training and emphasise the increase in the number of training places for young people under this Government and at the present time compared with the position under the Labour Government. No doubt he will also stress, as the *Financial Times* reported this morning, that Labour's minimum wage policy would

"reduce the incentive both for workers to train and for employers to train them."

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a narrow statement about this week's business. It should not range wider than the two debates in question.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that on Friday it will be appropriate to debate the recent Aims of Industry document which calculated that Labour's renationalisation programme would cost the taxpayer about £7 billion per annum? Does my right hon. Friend agree that countries throughout the world, even those in eastern Europe, have now rejected the dogma of nationalisation to which the Labour party is still wedded?

Mr. MacGregor: It will be entirely appropriate to discuss those matters on Friday. Labour has put forward at least three major renationalisation proposals and the debate will be another example of how Labour's tax and expenditure pledges simply do not add up. My hon. Friend is right to say that a very big cost is attached to those commitments.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Wales either to intervene in Wednesday's debate or to make a statement about the increasing jobs crisis facing the valley communities, especially my communities in Merthyr and Rhymney, where during the recess there was an announcement about the closure of the Thorn lighting plant, which has been with us since 1947? On top of that, there have been 300 redundancies at Hoover and the deep navigation colliery in Treharris has closed. Will the Leader of the House make sure that the Secretary of State explains to the House how his valleys initiative will be bolstered to deal with our growing jobs crisis?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, Wednesday's debate will last only three hours, and so that those who wish to take part can do so, there will be a limit on the number of Government spokesmen. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's general points to the attention of whomever will speak for the Government.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Perhaps my right hon. Friend could take himself back to the interesting suggestion by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that we should decant a few Opposition Members into county hall. If that were done and Opposition Members got their feet under the table there, there would be no risk whatever of the return of the Greater London council.

Mr. MacGregor: That would depend on which Opposition Members were there, but I recall that some Opposition Members who were in county hall engaged in massive empire building and in a great deal of unnecessary expenditure for the people of London.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell his colleague who will speak in Wednesday's debate on London matters that one of the issues about which Londoners most want to hear in the context of the Government's policy for the remainder of this Parliament is what they will do properly to house people in the capital city? What will they do to remove more and more people from the streets, to stop rents escalating out of control, the regular repossessions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such matters would be much more appropriate for Wednesday's debate. We have three more statements to come. I ask hon. Members to ask questions and not to make statements.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister make sure that his colleague deals with these issues on Wednesday and gives some positive answers and statements?

Mr. MacGregor: I am tempted to answer that myself, but I shall bear in mind what you have said, Mr. Speaker, and simply say that the Minister will deal with those matters in the debate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the debate will provide an opportunity to

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

test the Opposition's priorities, given that the Leader of the Opposition will not say whether a Labour Government would spend more money on health? They want renationalisation and they will either confiscate or say that there is a great priority and will take shares away from pension funds and individuals rather than bolster the public services. May we also check that the nationalisation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That would be interesting for Friday's debate, but I think that the hon. Member has asked his question.

Mr. Bottomley: On the priorities of nationalisation, if we are told by the official spokesman for the Opposition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair to ask more than one question. The hon. Gentleman is overdoing it.

Mr. Bottomley: Such a programme would cost the country too much.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right that the Labour pledges involve massive expenditure, which would have to be financed at the expense of the taxpayer and of the priorities that we believe to be right.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The Leader of the House said that, in the debate on London, his ministerial colleague would outline the Government's constructive proposals. In that case, he will not have anything to say.

Mr. MacGregor: Nor have I, because that is a very empty suggestion.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Has my right hon. Friend received any request from the Opposition—who have been loud in saying that they want to discuss the proposed possible merger or takeover of ICI, but, when given an opportunity to debate it on an Opposition day, have run away from doing so?

Mr. MacGregor: The Opposition have chosen the two subjects that they have for Wednesday, and both choices are theirs.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Leader of the House confirm that a Scottish Office Minister will wind up the second of Wednesday's two debates? Would that not provide him with an opportunity to explain to Scottish Members of Parliament the circumstances surrounding the current threat of the closure of Ravenscraig, Scotland's deepening unemployment crisis, and the failure of the Scottish office to provide training, especially for those who are physically and mentally handicapped? That is now a scandal in Scotland, and we should have a statement about it.

Mr. MacGregor: Wednesday's debate will inevitably be short, and I cannot at this stage say which Minister will wind up the debate to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman explain what he meant by the ways and means resolutions to which he referred?

Mr. MacGregor: That is a fair point. The ways and means resolutions relate to amendments and new clauses passed during the Committee stage of the Finance Bill. They cover a number of matters, and I would be happy to advise the hon. Gentleman what they are. In any event, they were matters dealt with in Committee.

Agriculture Council

3.40 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the 1991 settlement of farm prices reached at the meeting of the Agriculture Council, which finished on 24 May. I was supported at that meeting by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

I am happy to state that this year's agreement met a number of important United Kingdom objectives. In particular, despite pressure from 10 member states in that council and in the Finance Council, no increase was made in the agricultural guideline for 1991 or 1992. The Commissioner formally confirmed that the package agreed contained sufficient economies for expenditure to be contained within the guidelines already set. That success is an important one, in that the integrity of the 1988 budget decisions has been successfully defended from a sustained attack by those who wish to weaken them. You may remember, Mr. Speaker, that in debates in the House, it was widely felt that that was not an obtainable objective, although the whole House hoped that we could reach it.

That outcome has been achieved by economies in a number of areas. There will be reductions in effective support prices for milk, beef, sheepmeat, oil seeds, proteins, and tobacco. In addition, there will be an increase in the cereals co-responsibility levy to 5 per cent. —although for those participating in set-aside schemes, that will be refunded in whole or in part. Also, there will be a decrease in milk quotas by 2 per cent. There are different options for achieving that. Producers will be compensated in some measure, either financially or by the allocation of quota obtained from a buy-up scheme.

In general, those changes are necessary and welcome, although I have continued to press for the cereals co-responsibility levy to be replaced by price cuts, as such cuts enable other farmers to buy their products at a reduced price, and therefore increase the market for the produce. There will be a new, one year set-aside scheme financed by the Community. The details are such that there ought to be a real incentive for take-up in all member states. One of my criticisms of the existing scheme is that take-up has been uneven in the different member states. I am not prepared to see large areas of Britian set aside so that other countries can increase their production.

I secured the addition of an environmental component to that new scheme. If the relevant environmental requirements are not met, payments will be reduced. That is a major change of policy, and one about which I am particularly pleased. That major step provides us with a basis for the discussions that will take place on the wider reform of the common agricultural policy.

It was agreed that African, Caribbean, and Pacific sugar suppliers will be compensated for the price reduction agreed in 1989. That will be welcome to the countries concerned, although I continue to believe that there are better ways of serving their interests.

The European Court has decided that quota must be found for certain producers who previously gave up milk production for a period. This is known as the Slom problem. Whatever its reservations, the United Kingdom naturally accepts the court's ruling. I do not believe that they are the most deserving producers, but we are a law-abiding country and must accept what the court has said.

We have insisted, however, that the extra quota must be found, to the fullest extent practicable, from the Community reserve. As a result, all the remaining Community reserve will be put out in proportion to previous allocations for Slom purposes, which will ensure that the United Kingdom receives the largest share.

For our farmers, the most important decision was to align the green pound with the market rate applicable from 27 May. This brings the green rate very close to our central rate in the ERM and means that, for the first time for many years, our farmers will be able to compete on equal terms with those elsewhere in the Community. I am sure that the House will welcome that achievement, and I am pleased to be the Minister able to announce it.

The position of producers in less favoured areas is further protected by an increase in the supplement to the ewe premium, which will compensate them for the reduction in the sheepmeat basic prices.

The impact of this outcome on United Kingdom producers depends in part on decisions yet to be taken, but it seems probable that the change in the green pound will largely outweigh the effect of the various economies in the different sectors. Producers in most other member states will not be able to benefit from green currency changes. The settlement will add about one tenth of 1 per cent. to food prices. I commend this outcome to the House.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): May I say how pleased Labour Members are that the Minister was able to come back with his decision on the agrimonetary measures? We think that the abolition of the differential with the green pound is a step in the right direction, and at least it allows British farmers to compete on equal terms with their overseas competitors.

Apart from that, this price report is, in essence, a holding report. It is a non-event, bearing in mind the fact that the Commission has a record beef surplus, a surplus of milk and too many cereals. We found little in the price support that will help those long-term problems.

The Minister rightly said that he was pleased that the settlement had been made within the price guidelines, and so are we, but I do not think that the budget guidelines are as clear as they first appear. Will the right hon. Gentleman concede that the result of the statement is that, this year alone, total budgetary expenditure on the CAP has increased by more than 13 per cent.? Will he also concede that there has been much manipulation of the budgetary guideline and a transfer of farm spending across the financial years 1991 and 1992? Does he agree that, by recalculating the dollar effect, the EC has managed to find an extra 300 mecu this year, and an estimated 1 becu to 2 becu next year? What contingency plans are there if the American dollar weakens, because if that happens the budget guidelines have been breached?

The Minister made great play of his new one-year set-aside scheme. Will it be a 12-month only set-aside scheme or the first of a series of schemes whereby farmers enter into a 12-month agreement to set aside their land? If that is so, does not it rather unfairly treat farmers who have already agreed to a five-year set-aside scheme? Has he any plans to deal with that?

Will the Minister confirm that the environmental component of the new scheme, which he lauds, is simply a

[Dr. David Clark]

vegetation growth on the land? Will he further confirm that, if this relevant environmental requirement, as he called it, is not met, farmers will lose a mere 10 per cent. of the grant? It seems to us that this is merely tautology, and not a genuine environmental scheme.

Why does the Minister think that the new scheme will work when it is plain that the old five-year set-aside scheme has not worked? There was a marginal decrease in cereal production, but farmers set aside their more marginal land and, with increased productivity, maintained their cereal output.

Are there provisions in the agreement for individual national Governments to top up any of these schemes? Has the Minister any proposals to top up his set-aside scheme, or does he intend to leave it at £50 an acre plus a rebate and co-responsibility levy?

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words about the agrimonetary activity. I am surprised that he did not point out that we were offered a third of what we got. We got the whole of it, which is more than most people thought possible.

I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman called this a non-event and went on to talk about beef, where we have recast the system in a remarkable way, and about milk, where we have cut quotas by 2 per cent. I wonder what kind of price cuts or quota cuts the hon. Gentleman would have proposed. I hope that, the next time he is invited to meet a farming audience—I had hoped to hear answers to some of his questions—he can explain what cuts in the milk price and in the quota he would propose for a country that is only 88 per cent. self-sufficient in butter fat, as Britain is at present.

It is true that the budget has increased, just as it decreased in previous years. That is understandable in the circumstances.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What about the 13 per cent.?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman talks from a seated position about 13 per cent. I hope that he will explain to his farmers whether he would have liked the budget to be cut by 13 per cent. His farmers will be interested in that, because they are among the farmers whom I have spent a lot of time protecting, the cost of which is included in that 13 per cent. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will speak for himself later.

Of course, the European Community has taken into account the changes in the parity value of the dollar. I should have been in considerable difficulty at the Dispatch Box if the dollar had moved in the opposite direction and the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) had said that we had not taken that into account and that we did so only when it seemed to suit our case. We take into account the latest possible movement, what has happened and what is likely to happen.

If the dollar were to move in the opposite direction, the Commission would have to take management action to keep the settlement within the guidelines, because the guidelines have that effect. For that reason, we were determined to keep the guidelines as they were. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that two countries won and 10 countries had to back down on that issue. That shows that, if one is determined to fight within the Community as an enthusiastic member of it, one can achieve what one wants to achieve.

The set-aside scheme is a 12-month scheme. I should like it to be clearly stated, rather than opaquely mentioned, that this was a precursor not to an annual scheme but to an extension of set-aside in the direction for which the United Kingdom has fought for many years. After all, the set-aside scheme was an invention of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who has made this case for a long time. I am pleased that what we have found to be successful in Britain will now be seen to be successful in the Community as a whole.

The hon. Member for South Shields talked about the lack of success. What did he want me to do? Did he want me to provide for more set-aside in this country than in other countries—so that, for example, the French could expand their production while we lost our markets? If that is the Opposition's official policy, it is all of a piece with advocating eating New Zealand apples and opposing eating British sausages. We now know exactly what the Opposition's view is—it is to cut prices to the British and to give more opportunities to our competitors.

As far as the environmental compensation is right, it is true that at the moment there is a need merely to have vegetative cover, to look after the land, to grow the crop and to plough the crop afterwards. That sets a standard that is the lowest level, but it is very different from not having an environmental requirement at all. Previously, set-aside could easily be characterised—I fear that the hon. Gentleman has sometimes been guilty of appearing to characterise it as such—as paying the farmer to do nothing, which is wholly unacceptable. We need to pay the farmer to look after the land—that is part of his traditional role, and something on which I intend to insist as part of Common Market agricultural reform.

The five-year scheme is important, and those who are involved in it will be able to be excused the 2 per cent. extra co-responsibility levy which has been added this time. This was a United Kingdom precondition. Part of the reason why the debates have continued for so long was that I was not prepared to agree to a set-aside scheme which set at a disadvantage those who had already accepted the restrictions.

The fact that many people have set aside their least good land does not seem to be a disadvantage. Set-aside has meant that the expansion of production has been less than it would otherwise have been. The Opposition must come to terms with the fact that, if one wants to reduce over-production, the only sensible way to do so rapidly without so distorting the market as to have long-term disadvantages is to have a major set-aside scheme that covers the whole of the European Community and which is not merely a means of attracting people into it in this country and in Germany.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate the importance of this statement to hon. Members with agricultural constituencies, but I remind them that there are two other statements. Therefore, I ask them to put brief questions to the Minister on this statement.

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, despite the very difficult

budgetary constraints, he has preserved the position of British farmers to a large extent and has ensured that their disadvantages are outweighed by the advantages over the green pound? Will he give some guideline on how the 2 per cent. reduction in the quota will be phased? Will he take it from me that he has met his commitment by reducing the size of the quota by an amount that the British farmer can withstand?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. The quota will be subject to a compensatory payment, and we shall have to buy out that 2 per cent. on a compulsory basis, but there will be compensation. The Slom quota is more difficult, because we still have to calculate how many will require the money. There are problems with the European Court judgment which we shall have to sort out, but I am pleased to say that we shall not only have the money from the European Community reserve; we shall also be able to retain the money that we had for the first Slom pay-out in order to apply that to this one. That means that the buy-out programme will be less extensive than it would otherwise have been.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister realise that the settlement will be judged in rural communities by its impact on farm incomes, on the rural economy and also on the countryside? Does he accept that farmers who are under great pressure will not take complete satisfaction from the continuing downward pressure on prices which the settlement will bring and which may be—this would be welcome—at least partially offset by this alignment of the currency with the central rate?

The Minister deserves congratulations on that. However, does he acknowledge that the emphasis on set-aside may lead to as many as 250,000 hectares being taken out of farm production, if the Minister's figures on take-up are true? Does that constitute long-term assistance to the maintenance of the countryside, which the people of this country like?

Mr. Gummer: Those of us who care about the countryside should not only ask questions but give some idea of the answers to the problem. The hon. Gentleman has counted out price pressure and set-aside. It is difficult to see what the hon. Gentleman proposes, except perhaps that we should continue to increase our spending while finding that the farmer does not get a sufficient proportion of that spending.

I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman will support me in my battles to get the common agricultural policy reformed, so that more of the expenditure gets to the farmer, so that the farmer can be compensated for his work to look after the countryside, so that we can get more money into the most difficult areas, so that we can help the farmer to market his products more effectively and so that the farmer can get a higher proportion of the added value. That is a policy to deal with the problems. The hon. Gentleman is proposing the usual thing from the Liberal Democrats, which is never to give a proper answer to anything, but merely to complain about everything that everybody else does.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations, especially on the elimination of the unfair disadvantage that our farmers have faced over the green pound? Now that this difficult round of price fixing is over, does my right hon. Friend think that the time is right to give agriculture a sense of direction? Would he consider publishing a White Paper or some other document in which to set out how the Government see the future of our agriculture?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is kind in his congratulations. I made clear the directions in which I should like the common agricultural policy to be reformed. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that when more than 80 per cent. of spending on agriculture comes from decisions made in Brussels by the Community as a whole, the future of agriculture depends centrally on the decisions that we shall make over the next six months, as well as on agreement under the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

I will consider my hon. Friend's proposal. There may be ways in which we can make even clearer the Government's commitment not only to farming, but to the five points of major change for which we look. The fact is that the decisions are yet to be made. I understand that farmers in those circumstances, are looking anxiously to see what decisions will be made under the Dutch presidency.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is it not true that the whole of the common agricultural policy is a complete and utter monstrosity? Despite all the chatter about reforming it, which we have been hearing for as long as anyone can remember, it is getting worse.

The Minister will have heard of the principle of subsidiarity—that things should not be done at Community level which could be done better at national level. Will he please press for the whole of British agriculture to be dealt with under the principle of subsidiarity, so that we can repatriate agricultural policy back to the House? Surely we can make a better fist of it than the shambles in Brussels?

Mr. Gummer: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman has ever asked me a question complaining about his constituents' shortage of food. He has never asked me such a question because of the success of the common agricultural policy. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself, because he is speaking with a full stomach and complaining about the system that has made that stomach full. He must accept that we are trying to change a system that was extremely successful at a time of shortage to one that can deal with a time of surplus, part of which it has created in seeking to solve the problems of post-war Europe.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated, particularly on his achievement on the green pound. He will know from visiting my constituency on several occasions that I represent the largest piece of grade 1 farmland in the north-west of England. His set-aside policy will be welcomed by my farmer constituents, but will my hon. Friend give me an undertaking that he will consider setting aside the poorer land first, before he sets aside the grade 1 farmland where the most productive farms are placed?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend asks a proper question. I want set-aside to be voluntary, so that farmers make their own decisions about which land to set aside. The level will be fixed to draw out of the system sufficient land to deal with surpluses. However, although I want set-aside to be voluntary for farms, I believe that there should be some

[Mr. Gummer]

compulsion for nations. Again, I wish to see a system with a target for each member of the European Community, so that we all share the burden, instead of some being prepared to pick it up more readily than others.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Minister accept that farmers are anxious to know how the details of the proposals will affect them? When and how will he announce the details, particularly as they affect the milk and cereals sectors? Will he, for example, state what the basic set-aside payment will be? What effect does he expect the proposals to have on farm incomes in Scotland?

Mr. Gummer: Several of the details are being worked out at this moment in the management committees. As soon as I have them, I shall make them as widely available as possible. If the hon. Gentleman has any worries about their availability, I hope that he will tell me. I shall seek to make up for any problems that arise. I shall certainly give the hon. Gentleman as much information as I possibly can.

On set-aside, the level at which the Community gives its support per acre, plus the advantage of not paying the co-responsibility levy on the rest of the farm's production, seems adequately to meet the needs of set-aside for this country. Indeed, I was worried about and refused to support one proposal that was on the table during part of the negotiations, which would have made set-aside less attractive in some countries than others. Once again, the United Kingdom would have found itself bearing the burden. I was not prepared to accept that.

Part of the reason why we fought on for many more hours was to obtain equal treatment. Therefore, I am not prepared of my own volition to change the equality of that treatment. We want to have a balance throughout the Community. Anyone who proposes the repatriation of agricultural policy does not understand how international the trade is, how impossible such a repatriation would be and the fact that it would lead to one country bidding against another. Therefore, the suggestion should be dismissed out of hand.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on creating a level food production field for the British farmer, but can he explain why, although British sheep may safely graze, the British sheep farmer must wait until 1993 for parity with the European sheep farmer?

Mr. Gummer: Of course it is difficult for the sheep farmer, but these matters are dealt with by marketing years. The United Kingdom Government have supported that, and in the past the system has often been to the advantage of the United Kingdom producer. I fear that, having enjoyed the advantages of stability within the system and the way in which the system had become a manipulable arrangement, it would be hard for us to demand—although we asked—that the marketing year should be changed.

My hon. Friend referred to sheep safely grazing. I hope that the changes that we have announced, which include speeding up alterations in the way in which the premiums work, will mean that we shall obtain even more of the European market for the best sheepmeat in the world.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Is there anything in the package to help sheep farmers in the mountain areas who are stuck with keeping mountain breeds of sheep? In the past two years, the price that they have obtained for the wool clip has been extremely low. Many such farmers are in doubt this year about whether it will be economic to shear their sheep. Can the Minister give any encouragement to farmers to carry out that practice? It would be cruel to the sheep not to shear them, and it would leave the countryside in a horrible state. I am sure that the Minister is aware that the price that farmers are likely to obtain for the wool will be low this year.

Mr. Gummer: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. The problem for the livestock industry has been especially severe. Not only sheep prices but beef prices have been low. Therefore, farms which usually relied on the success of one product when the price of the other fell have found that the prices of both products have fallen at the same time. That is why I was pleased to see a 4 ecu supplement per ewe for farmers in the less favoured areas, which will give them added support. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government's policy on those matters over which we have control, such as HLCA payments and suckler cow payments, has been to try to aim extra help at the most difficult areas. I shall continue to do that.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): My right hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that getting rid of the iniquitous green pound will cause rejoicing in the countryside and that there is great interest in the one-year set-aside. Will he confirm beyond doubt that the refund on the cereal levy will cover the remaining crops and not be equivalent to the 15 per cent. set-aside? Will he confirm that the environmental cover crop on the set-aside does not cover the one-year rotational fallow, which is environmentally friendly in as much as the following crop requires a reduced input of fertilisers and pesticides?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that the Government included the environmental set-aside not because we felt we needed it ourselves—we would have continued our own policy on that front—but because we wanted a common attitude throughout the Community so that farmers who set aside in the rest of the Community face the same costs as farmers in this country.

I shall consider the problems of continuing fallow where it is suitable, and I shall give my hon. Friend an answer as soon as I have one. I think that he will find that it is to his satisfaction. On the 15 per cent. set-aside, the cut in the co-responsibility levy is for all the rest of the cereal crop.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Minister has acknowledged that the European Court decision will cause real difficulties to producers who took up quota when other producers went out of production. Will he guarantee that those producers will not suffer further cuts because of subsequent arrangements? If one takes account of the inclusion of yoghurt and milk products in the existing quota, it is clear that working farmers are already at risk from extra cuts across the board.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased that the hon. Lady agrees that there are complications with Slom which none of us wanted or wished to face. However, we must face up to them and the major problems are now clear. We have dealt

with the primary part of those problems, even though we still have to deal with the secondary part. Little else can emerge, although one hardly likes to say that of such a contentious issue. We will be able to pay an important proportion of the increase to producers from the extra quota we receive from the Community, which either way increases the British quota, if not by as much as I should like, at least significantly and importantly.

In addition, we will need a buy-out scheme for that part of the quota which it is necessary to redistribute. Nobody will have a special disadvantage, but the fact that the scheme will be in operation will mean movement of quota from some people to others. I hope to make that as voluntary as humanly possible.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): As a result of the Government's commitment to the European Community and my right hon. Friend's typically robust defence of British farmers' interests, he has returned from Brussels with a fine settlement on the green pound. He will be aware that many farmers are concerned about the uncompetitive pressures on their livelihoods from European farmers. Will my right hon. Friend therefore continue his efforts to eradicate any points of unfair competition that damage our national interest? Will he persevere in defending our countryside, especially the less favoured areas such as Exmoor and the Brendon hills, in my constituency?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend never leaves me the opportunity to forget the Brendon hills or Exmoor; other hon. Members remind me of other places. I hope that those who represent urban constituencies recognise the degree to which a healthy farming industry is essential if the countryside is to be protected and cared for. I am sad that some colleagues seem to think that we can do without farmers because, somehow or other, the countryside will look after itself.

I am pleased to say that the advantages that we have gained from that price settlement set the scene for the arguments, which will be very tough and difficult, about the reform of the common agricultural policy. The environment must increasingly be one of the triggers of a common agricultural policy rather than an add-on extra, largely financed by Governments, as is presently the case.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on bringing back from Brussels a better than expected deal for British farmers. However, may I counsel him against gilding the lily of the common agricultural policy, as he seemed to be doing a moment ago? Will he confirm that the CAP still costs the average British family approximately £18 a week and that that figure is rising because agriculture expenditure is increasing by some 13 per cent. a year, even after all the creative accountancy conjuring tricks so beloved by the commissioners in Brussels? What is being done about the longer-term solutions—in particular the admirable MacSharry proposals, which may have put an end to those proposals?

Mr. Gummer: I hesitate to disagree with my hon. Friend, but, having asked such a question, he cannot expect unanimity. When speaking of creative accountancy, from whatever source, we must not pretend that world prices are real. They are simply the dumped prices of countries that support their agriculture, many of which do so to a greater degree than that achieved by the common agricultural policy. Therefore, any figures based on comparisons of what we pay for our food and what could be paid by a small number of people buying dumped food at the lowest possible price, have no meaning whatsoever.

Although I, as much as anyone else in the House, want a thorough reform of the common agricultural policy, that reform will not be achieved by suggesting to the British people that we can guarantee our future supply of food, ensure that the majority of our farmland can continue to be farmed, and care for the countryside, especially the most vulnerable areas, without paying some money for it. Even after common agricultural reform, major costs will be incurred in ensuring that we have the environment that we deserve.

I would not describe MacSharry's original proposals as "admirable". They are so unadmirable that they received the unfettered praise only of Greece, and the opposition of almost every other country. I believe that he has gone back to produce a second version.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): In what way can Commonwealth sugar producers be better served than by the settlement—on which I congratulate my right hon. Friend—of 30 million ecu in respect of the 1989 sugar prices?

Mr. Gummer: The developing countries, especially the ACP ones, would be better served if we could reorganise our trading practices to enable us to buy their products and increase trade, rather than take direct action and grant aid.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: In consideration of the hon. Lady's happy marriage during the recess, I shall call her.

Ms. Abbott: How can the Minister justify the Governor of the Bank of England, Mr. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, making £60,000 last year out of set-aside? Does that not show how the system is open to abuse?

Mr. Gummer: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her change of status, but commiserate with her on asking a question about the Governor of the Bank of England on this, of all days. She should add to her comments the cost to the Governor of the Bank of England, or anyone else who sets aside, of looking after that land—*[Interruption.]* Those hon. Members who laugh have not been near a farm for a long time.

Mr. Maclennan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it concern the reply given to the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Maclennan: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I think that a point of order is justified.

Mr. Maclennan: In view of the fact that the Minister invited me to state the policy of the Liberal Democrats——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is asking for my protection, I must give it. I asked hon. Members to ask questions and not to make statements. The hon. Gentleman asked a question, which was why he was unable to state the Liberal policy.

Whales

4.20 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): With permission, I wish to make a statement about whales and the International Whaling Commission.

Recognising the great concern of this House about whales, which I share, I wanted to have the opportunity to report on the first possible occasion on the outcome of the 43rd annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission which took place in Reykjavik last week—27 to 31 May 1991. It was a very successful meeting for the United Kingdom delegation. We set three principal targets, and we have achieved those and more.

First, the moratorium on commercial whaling remains in force. While some stocks have been assessed fully, we co-sponsored a resolution on the proposed revised management procedure. Its further development is now clearly on the basis of low risk and high target levels designed to give maximum safety to whales. We are at this stage only considering the further development of a management system designed to give protection to whales.

Moreover, requests even for modest quotas from Japan for minke whales and from Iceland for fin and minke whales were rejected. There is therefore to be no resumption of commercial whaling this year. Also, Norway's request for the removal of the north-east Atlantic minke's status as a protection stock was also firmly rejected, following presentation of a clear and scientifically based case by the United Kingdom delegation. Minke will therefore still be a species not to be taken.

Further, the United Kingdom delegation co-sponsored resolutions calling on Japan and the USSR to reconsider their proposed research whaling programmes. Those resolutions were successfully passed.

Our second main target was the issue of humaneness of killing methods—methods which are still being used legally by aboriginal whalers. The United Kingdom delegation proposed and secured the establishment of a special workshop, which will thoroughly review all aspects of the methods of killing whales. The last major review was 10 years ago. The issue of efficiency and effectiveness, which is fundamental to humaneness, must be reviewed, and I welcome the support of all members of the IWC in recognising that such a review is necessary. Following a request last year from the United Kingdom, Brazil has withdrawn its objection to banning the use of the cold grenade harpoon. I welcome that.

Thirdly, we also carried forward the work on small cetaceans—dolphins, porpoises and the like. The IWC is divided on whether it has the competence to deal with small cetaceans as well as the great whales. The United Kingdom is quite clear that the IWC does have this competence. In discussions, we pressed this further, and we hope that the issue has been better opened up for more constructive debate next year.

Further, we co-sponsored a successful resolution which will ensure that a comprehensive report on the known status of the many species of whales, dolphins and porpoises prepared by the IWC's sub-committee on small cetaceans to the scientific committee will be passed to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. That gives us another way to try to protect the whale and the small cetaceans.

Those parts of the IWC's scientific report recommending action for the conservation or preservation of vulnerable species will, by this resolution, be brought specifically to the attention of the Governments involved. The House will remember how concerned I was that the Governments of some countries who are outside the IWC chase whales and various small cetaceans. Another resolution which set out these concerns in greater detail has been kept on the table and will provide another platform for further discussion next year.

Tight quota arrangements were also set for aboriginal subsistence whaling by the Alaska Eskimos and the Greenland Inuits, and the quota of grey whales has been reduced by 10.

The many decisions taken at this year's IWC will further such success. The United Kingdom delegation played a leading role in securing these achievements, and I want to pay tribute to the outstanding work of my officials and scientists in this difficult international forum. The conservation of whales has been pursued successfully for this year, and the United Kingdom has much of which to be proud. We must not, however, let up in our efforts for the preservation of our whales deserves our whole-hearted support.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I am grateful to the Minister for coming at this earliest opportunity to report to the House on the outcome of the IWC conference. Whaling concerns many in this country, and we share the abhorrence of almost everyone at the practice of hunting and killing whales. I must say, though, that the Minister's report today was at some variance with almost every other report by journalists and observers at the conference. The Labour party was certainly disappointed by its outcome.

We were pleased that the plans and proposals of Iceland, Norway and Japan were defeated, but the hunting of minke whales is going to begin next year, and I very much regret that the British Government did not adopt a stronger anti-whaling stance in Reykjavik.

Now that the International Whaling Commission has failed to live up to expectations, is the Minister planning to take any international initiatives? Is he planning to raise the matter at the United Nations, where it is on the table, or in the EC, so as to try to arrest the practice of whale slaughter?

The Minister makes great play of one of his four objectives—that concerning the small cetaceans. He reminds the House that a paper before the sub-committee of the commission pointed out that dolphins, porpoises and other small whales were threatened with extinction in many parts of the world if no action was taken. I know that the Minister understands this point, because he has made many fine speeches on the matter, but I cannot help thinking that his actions in Reykjavik betrayed a slightly and characteristically disingenuous approach to it.

Does the right hon. Gentleman deny that, after initially signing the resolution to protect small cetaceans, he had second thoughts? Does he deny that he instructed the United Kingdom commissioner not to speak up for the resolution? Does he deny that, in the coffee breaks at Reykjavik, the United Kingdom put pressure on other delegations, especially that of the United States, to withdraw the resolution to protect the small cetaceans?

Could it be that he had cold feet because he had given the go-ahead to Cornish fishermen to begin the obnoxious practice of large-scale drift netting, which, as he and the House may know, will involve nets up to five miles long, which will create deserts in many parts of the sea and result in the killing of many porpoises, dolphins and small whales?

I heard the Minister defending this practice on the television. Does he further deny that the United Kingdom delegation approached the United States, which had announced its intention to table a resolution to the IWC to ban the use of drift-net fishing? Do the Government deny that they put pressure on the United States not to go ahead with that resolution?

Will the Minister listen, even at this eleventh hour, not only to Opposition Members but to many Conservative Members who say no to the practice of drift-net fishing? Unless we say no to it, we are entering the trade of killing small cetaceans just as much as countries such as Japan, Iceland, Norway and others.

Mr. Gummer: I have rarely heard anyone undermine so offensively our battle against whaling and against the problems concerning small cetaceans. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) should be reminded of one or two facts, and he might remember his own reputation as a man of decency.

The Government's policy was outlined when I was Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in a document which I produced jointly with Sir Peter Scott, at the meeting of the IWC at Bournemouth some years ago. Our policy was made clear in that document, and we have adhered to it. To my knowledge, the hon. Member for South Shields has never written to me to complain about drift netting off the north-east coast of England. I have never heard him mention that. Why not? I shall tell the House why not.

The reason is that the drift nets used off the north-east coast of England are not 60 miles long. The drift nets of which the United Nations is speaking, which are being used in the south Atlantic, are up to 100 miles long. We are talking of the drift nets that are being used off our coast, which have never, in any scientifically measurable way, caught a dolphin. If they did, or if they caused any damage of that sort, the first Government in the world to take action would be this Government, and the first Minister to take action would be this Minister.

This is an occasion when some indignation at the attack of the hon. Member for South Shields is in order. Of course my delegation did none of the things that the hon. Gentleman suggested. We were the co-sponsors of the motion to which he referred. We did not press it to a vote only because we believed that we would lose the vote, and therefore lose the opportunity next year to press the motion to a successful conclusion. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself for casting aspersions on my officials and on all those in this place who have worked against the slaughter of whales while endeavouring to conserve small cetaceans. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of his response to my statement.

Far from defending the Cornish nets, I made it clear that, in the negotiations within the European Community that will take place in July, we shall be considering motions that, if agreed, would make the nets illegal. The United Kingdom will be supporting those changes and will be seeking to ensure that the carrying of such nets will be illegal, so as to ensure that we protect waters that the European Community does not control. *[Interruption.]* When the hon. Gentleman says from a seated position, "Will we be supporting that?", having told us that he heard my television statements, it is clear that he failed to listen to those parts that he did not like. I made it clear in my television statements that we would be supporting it. The fact that he was not clear enough in his understanding is one that he must attribute to Independent Television News, which avoided broadcasting answers to the questions which he raised. It included merely half a sentence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman, like some others, was misled about the Government's position.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Before the departure of my right hon. Friend's delegation to Iceland, he expressed considerable concern to those of us who went to see him about the method that was being used to kill large whales. He made it clear to us that he intended that the delegation should raise that specific issue and should seek to ensure, before any major whaling operations commenced, that considerable improvements would be made in the manner in which these large mammals are killed. Was any progress made in that direction?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it is important that we now have a working party to discuss the matter. It means that the issue of the humaneness of killing methods occupies a central position in the discussions. That is something that my hon. Friend and I were concerned about. I think that we have achieved what we wanted. We must build on what has been secured and ensure that the work that is done will produce the results that we know it should produce, to show exactly the extent to which some of the methods used are appallingly inhumane.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North West): I accept the Minister's sincerity on this issue. We have had meetings about it, so I am aware of his position. Is it not a fact, however, that, under the terms of the IWC's decisions, limited commercial whaling will resume in a couple of years? The fact that Iceland has threatened to leave the IWC is a matter of great concern. Is it possible to renegotiate the terms of reference of the IWC and move it away from whale slaughter, which in the end is what it is all about, into a position of ethical consideration? The majority of people in this country, in the United States and probably throughout the world are entirely opposed to the slaughter of whales. We must try to impress that upon the nations that continue the slaughter.

Is it not possible to make any application for EC membership from Norway and Iceland conditional on their abandoning any form of whaling—scientific, commercial or any other?

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I appreciate his strong feelings, which I share to a large extent. The IWC is the only body that has been able to bring about a moratorium. The Government's first aim must be to ensure—as would any Government who believed in protecting whales—that that moratorium continues. There is no agreement that commercial whaling should start either next year or the year after. The hon. Member for South Shields is entirely wrong. I believe that he is disingenuous and mischievous to suggest that.

[Mr. Gummer]

We believe that we must accept the constitution of the IWC, which requires us to discuss the control of the management of whaling and the enforcement of that management. We are continuing to do that. We have taken some early steps, but there is much more to be done. We stick clearly by the statement that we do not believe that we ought even to discuss the taking of whales unless fundamental conditions are met. In our view, they are not being met. I do not believe that they will be met next year, because a whole raft of information is vitally necessary before anybody, even enthusiasts, can effectively and properly propose the resumption of whaling in the IWC.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) knows—better, it seems, than his party's Front-Bench spokesman—that it is better to use the existing system, which has achieved a moratorium, than to kick the whole thing over and end up with no protection for the whale. The comments of the hon. Member for South Shields are contradictory. He said that the conference was a failure, but the only country that has threatened to leave the IWC is the country that complains that it has not been allowed to start whaling again.

Some journalists have made different comments, but I want the facts to be given. Which country has threatened to leave the commission? Not the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia or America—which are strongly opposed to the slaughter of whales in the conditions that have prevailed until now—but the country that has been pressing most strongly for the resumption of commercial whaling.

I would be sad if those countries left the commission. We must make the system continue to work, because it is the best we have. I will have a meeting with Wildlife Link—which I always have after such discussions—to see how progress can be made not only in the IWC and the United Nations, but on the specific problems caused by the taking of whales by Turkey and Canada.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his substantial achievements at the conference. Does he accept that whales have human levels of sensitivity, intelligence and understanding? It is especially murderous to kill them by the methods used in the past. Under no circumstances should we return to the slaughter of whales on such a scale, whatever Iceland, Norway or Japan says.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend is right in saying that the whale is a very advanced animal and must be protected. I feel strongly that we must do so in the one forum that enables us to stop other people taking whales. If whales were in danger only from this country, which has not whaled since the early 1960s, they would be safe. That international forum is to protect them from the dangers posed by other people.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I thank the Minister for his statement. The result was successful and should be commended. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that there is no ground for complacency, because in effect all we have done is to agree a further year's moratorium. He will know the strength of feeling in this country that the moratorium should be indefinite.

I understand that, since the Minister began his statement on the Agriculture Council, the Icelanders have announced that they are leaving the IWC. If that is the case, would not a Europewide ban be the only clear way of making the position in respect of European Community negotiations absolutely clear for Iceland and Norway—should Norway be minded to follow the same policy?

Mr. Gummer: There is already a ban on the import of whale products into the Community. I do not believe that the kind of ban to which the hon. Member refers will affect the position—and I have heard only what the hon. Gentleman has heard. However, it would be sad if Iceland decided to leave the IWC. That is a kind of backhanded tribute to the work that we have tried to perform.

It is very serious for a country to state that, contrary to international scientific evidence, contrary to the non-existence of a management agreement, contrary to our ability to enforce such an agreement and contrary to an understanding of the humaneness of the killing methods, it should decide unilaterally to take up the cause once more. In the end, the Icelandic Government, who are after all democratic and civilised, will reconsider. I will do everything that I can to assist that. The comments of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey about this matter—which, after all, does not divide the parties—were in stark contradiction to those of the spokesman for the official Opposition.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I thank my right hon. Friend for his work in relation to small cetaceans. It is more than 30 years since I first set sail from the Solent. In those days, basking sharks and dolphins were regular and enjoyable companions as one sailed westward down the channel. I have not seen a dolphin east of the Bishop's rock for at least 20 years. This is a very urgent and necessary move.

Should we not consider banning the sale of monofilament netting to amateur fishermen? Great clods of such netting come ashore on the beaches of the Isle of Wight whenever we have a south-westerly gale. Those nets must do irreparable harm to the marine wildlife in the western approaches.

Mr. Gummer: I will have to consider the second point separately. It is a different issue from the earlier point raised by my hon. Friend. However, I am also conscious of the fact that our children have the same right to see dolphins as we had when we were young. That is an aspect of conservation about which I am most concerned.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Although it may seem out of character, may I pay tribute to the Minister for the very hard line that he took with regard to the Norwegians and in particular the Icelanders? My wife is Icelandic, members of my family in Iceland have been part of the whaling industry, and I sometimes visit that country. Should not the Icelanders realise that they are not enhancing their international reputation by pressing their case in favour of whaling as they do? Should they not realise that they are upsetting the civilised world, which objects to the practice and which pleads with the Icelandic Government and nation to end that industry?

The Icelanders are no longer dependent on it. They do not need it as an industry in future. May a call go from this

House today to the Icelanders requesting them to review their position, not to leave the commission but to play a full and responsible part in the international community?

Mr. Gummer: It is entirely characteristic of the hon. Gentleman to make that kind of comment, and he would not expect me to say otherwise. We can have hard arguments, but there are some things about which we agree, and this is one.

I hope that the Icelanders take the comments of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) very seriously. Iceland is a northern outpost of European civilisation. European civilisation is primarily about the rule of law. We cannot have a rule of law in the sea unless there are management arrangements, enforcement and rules about humaneness and conservation. Those are all necessary precursors for any civilised discussion about a topic such as whaling. To refuse to wait for those precursors illustrates an attitude towards whales which is unacceptable, and I hope that the Icelanders will review it at once.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I thank the Minister for his genuine efforts, which reflect the general view of hon. Members and their constituents about whaling. I want to press him about cetaceans. He will be aware of their importance in my area, as the Moray Firth is one of the two remaining centres for bottle-nosed dolphins. How will the population of bottle-nosed dolphins be assessed? What contacts will be made with the various interested organisations such as the fisheries industry and the local authorities that have a responsibility for pollution aspects in our waterways? I should be grateful if the Minister can give us some information about that and some idea of the time scale involved.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Lady's remarks were kind. In the past few days, we have initiated a British plan to consider the impact of netting of all kinds on dolphins and other cetaceans. That is part of our contribution. We shall insist that that working party receives papers from a wide range of groups, not only of fishery interests, but groups such as Wildlife Link, which are fundamentally concerned about the conservation of whales. We shall ensure that there is the widest possible consultation and the best possible scientific evidence. In the end, action must be taken on the scientific evidence, and that is what we are trying to ensure. That is one reason why I am particularly sad that the Icelanders feel that they should leave the IWC —if that is true. They are saying that they are not prepared to wait for and act upon scientific evidence.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): How does the Minister respond to the accusation of Mr. Sean White of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, that the buck passing by the British delegation at the meeting will result in several species of dolphin, whale and porpoise becoming extinct? Are not the Government exposed to criticism in spite of the good things that came from the meeting and to the accusation that their policies on small cetaceans—dolphins and porpoises—are little more than pretence and deceit?

Mr. Gummer: In so far as we are all exposed to wholly untruthful claims, yes, I suppose that we are exposed. However, our aim is the protection of small cetaceans and whales. To continue that aim, we and our co-sponsors withdrew the second of the two small cetacean elements, because we wanted to make the best that we could of the one that we managed to get through.

I can tell the hon. Member directly that he does the cause of small cetaceans and whales no good by trying to shoot his own Government, who are universally supported in these issues by all parties, instead of supporting us to deal with those people who are fighting the battle from the other side. I do not know of the particular statement made by a particular individual. However, any environmental agency that seeks to undermine the single-minded view of the British Government does the cause of whales no good. Of course I could get much public support by stating this, standing for that, or banging the table about the other, but that does not save a single small cetacean or whale. It is my business to make it possible to continue the moratorium, to fight the cause of conservation and to do that in the only arena that counts, the only one we have, which is the IWC.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Minister use the same vigour to appeal to the Icelandic Government to reconsider their decision to leave the IWC? Will he make it clear to them that many people in this country will demand that the British Government and the EC look harshly on any application by Iceland to join and that they will be considering ways to introduce a consumer boycott on Icelandic products to bring pressure on Iceland to reconsider? It would be better for Iceland to reconsider now than to be forced to do so as a result of consumer or other action in future.

Mr. Gummer: I promise to do my best to ensure that Iceland does not leave the IWC. We have only just heard what has happened. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would want to leave it to me to decide, in consultation with many other people, how best to fight that battle. I prefer to win the battle rather than to make public points about the way in which I fight it. In the end, it is not the method of fighting that matters but the success of the battle. I want to keep Iceland within the fold of civilised nations.

Children's Homes (Staffordshire)

4.50 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): With permission, I would like to make a statement about the report on residential care for children published during the recess by Staffordshire county council. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The House will know that, after a thorough inquiry, Allan Levy QC and Mrs. Barbara Kahan have reported on the so-called pindown approach to the residential care of children that had been practised in some Staffordshire residential homes. They say that this was

"in all its manifestations intrinsically unethical, unprofessional and unacceptable".

They also conclude that the children who were in pindown

"suffered in varying degrees the despair and the potentially damaging effects of isolation, the humiliation of having to wear nightclothes during the day . . . and of having all their personal possessions removed; and the intense frustration and boredom from the lack of communication, companionship with others and recreation".

Their report also says:

"It has been suggested that pindown by any other name probably exists the length and breadth of the country, and is probably more prevalent than anyone would officially care to admit. We received no such admissions in evidence. The practice of pindown has ceased in Staffordshire. If it exists under any other name elsewhere it should be summarily terminated".

The report covers a number of other related issues. It examines in detail allegations that known adult sexual offenders were on occasion permitted contact with children in a home, and that county council officers arranged for a young person for whom they had responsibility to obtain accommodation in a house owned by a convicted sexual offender. Their findings on those points are drafted with scrupulous care. They found inadequate vetting and notification in the cases that they examined, and made recommendations of general importance. The Government will respond with the greatest seriousness to these.

The report also criticises Staffordshire's supervision of arrangements known as "fundwell". Under those, from the mid-1970s until 1987 a council officer set up and developed a network of voluntary organisations and private companies which in some instances contracted their services directly back to the social services department. The district auditor is undertaking a further investigation into financial aspects of those arrangements.

When right hon. and hon. Members read this comprehensive report in full, they will recognise the lucidity, balance, compassion and firmness of purpose of its authors. Looking after the often extremely difficult and disturbed children and adolescents in residential care has become increasingly challenging for those responsible, but Parliament has laid a statutory duty on local authorities to

"give first consideration to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child . . . and so far as practicable, to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child".

The House, like the Government, must deplore the position revealed in Staffordshire up to 1989.

The report was commissioned by Staffordshire county council in June last year after consultation with the Department of Health. It examines the Staffordshire issues in the wider context of national policies and it makes valuable recommendations for social services departments about the objectives, management and control of children's homes and the recruitment and training of their staff. Many of these reflect existing good practice around the country.

As the House knows, the Children Act 1989 is to be implemented in full on 14 October this year. By common consent, it is the most important reforming measure in the children's field that we have had in this century. The Government, after consultation, have already issued four substantial volumes of regulations and statutory guidance on its implementation. The volume that covers residential care and secure accommodation was issued for consultation in September last year. It will be published in amended form this month. Many of the recommendations in the Levy report are already addressed in that document. These binding regulations and statutory guidance will require scrutiny of residential care for children throughout the country and its reform where necessary.

The Government are not content to rest on the significant work already in progress. We are today issuing a statutory guidance circular charging all social services authorities to check immediately that their residential care practices are wholly free of the abuses found in Staffordshire, and that they conform to the statutory provisions and regulations governing these matters made by successive Secretaries of State. We are also urgently requiring them to ensure that a statutory complaints procedure is in place and readily understood by all children in residential care.

The House will already be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has instructed Sir William Utting, the chief social services inspector, to undertake a special review of residential child care, concentrating particularly on questions of monitoring, control and implementation in the light of this important report. Sir William will consult independent experts outside Government. We will publish his report and promptly address its conclusions.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): In dealing with children's homes, we must avoid descending into a spiral of crisis followed by inquiry, followed by crisis and another inquiry. Inquiries are important, but in order to prevent children from again being subjected to the inhuman and cruel regime of pindown or something like it, we must establish a rigorous and continuing system of inspection. At the moment, no such system exists.

The problem is not that inspection fails because people are covering up but that the people with the power and responsibility simply do not know what is going on. Many homes do not see a senior manager, let alone an inspector, from one year to the next. Those who are responsible must know what is going on, and they cannot know unless they go to see for themselves.

Does the Minister agree that there should be service sampling by senior managers, directors of social services and even the Government's own social services inspectorate who would stay from time to time in the homes for which they are responsible? Daytime visits do not give the proper feel and flavour of an institution. It is ironic that the challenging and difficult task of caring for the most disturbed young people falls on the shoulders of the youngest, least trained, least qualified and lowest paid people in social work.

As the Minister said, the Utting inquiry will have to look at staffing, but we know that we will not attract into children's homes workers with maturity and judgment

while the pay and status of residential care work are so pitifully low. In the home where pindown originated, only one member of staff had any social work qualifications. When the Utting report inevitably raises the problem of training, will the Government make extra resources available for training?

Another essential way to protect children is to ensure that they have rights. I welcome the Minister's mention of a complaints system. However, we need not just a complaints procedure but access to independent advice for children so that they can make their rights enforceable. It is unacceptable to treat children badly because they have problems. The test that must be applied is whether the care in a home is good enough for the child of a manager in the relevant social services department. We cannot have double standards by providing care that is good enough for children in homes but unacceptable for anybody else's children.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady makes some important points about the need for a coherent approach to the needs of those in residential care. In recent years, their numbers have plummeted from 33,000 to about 11,000. Too many local authorities have singularly failed to recognise the need for good service and proper training. Too many social workers treat their time in residential care as work experience prior to taking up appointments in the community. About 90 per cent. of local authority field social workers are qualified, but the level in residential homes is much lower. That is why we introduced the training support programme, and this year particularly focused it on the needs of residential home workers. This year, some 140,000 local authority staff will be trained under that programme, including approaching half those working in residential care.

Local authorities are the employers of social workers, and they will need to address the status of those in residential homes. I endorse the hon. Lady's point about the importance of social workers in residential homes feeling valued and respected by social services management. The events in Staffordshire, and those in Southwark, in the hon. Lady's own area, demonstrated a complete lack of responsibility among those in social services management to fulfil their obligations to act as good parents to the children entrusted to their care. Above all, it is a question of supervision, control and management—and that is fairly and squarely and unequivocally the responsibility of the social services department.

The point about the complaints procedures is significant. It is appalling that the children's cries went unheard for too long. All children going into care need access to an independent complaints procedure—a telephone number—so that their voice can be heard. The system of statutory visits and of independent visitors failed in Staffordshire. They are meant as safeguards to ensure that children in care are never subjected again to the abuse, neglect and suffering that occurred in Staffordshire and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman).

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that it is a question not simply of a one-off operation but of a deliberate policy pursued by the Labour county council? Furthermore, it is crystal clear from the report itself that resources was one of the key issues, and that the Labour county council allocated such a low priority to looking-after the children in care that, on examination, it was discovered that the social services department—that includes the Labour politicians who were running the services—had the lowest funds of any in any county in England or Wales. Does not my hon. Friend agree that that is an absolute disgrace, and that it is not just the social services department's top management but the elected politicians and Labour county councillors, who constantly prattle on about resources, who were responsible for a deliberate policy of keeping resources so low that the children were put at such abominable risk?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend puts his case powerfully. I refer him to that part of the report in which the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) makes it clear that

"historically, we have been negligent both in expenditure and in policy, not just in social services."

The children concerned were subjected to appalling neglect, and I confirm the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The responsibility of the elected members of the council is a matter for the council and for the voters of Staffordshire. However, I endorse the remarks of the new director of social services, and congratulate her on making them. Staffordshire has wisely appointed a director of national eminence, Christine Walby. She has responded instantly to the report, and has put in hand the steps that need to be taken.

Of the report's 39 recommendations, almost all of them are directed at improvements that Staffordshire needs to undertake to protect children more effectively. I hope that all social services departments in the country will act speedily and effectively, to ensure that their own houses are in order.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does not the Minister agree that the issue is far too important to provide an excuse for making cheap party political points? I deplore the attempt to do so by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

A fresh start is necessary in Staffordshire, and that requires, first, the resignation of the chairman of its social services committee, Mike Poulter; the architect of pindown, Tony Latham, should be dismissed; and Staffordshire county council should immediately offer compensation to the children who were the victims of that policy, without having to be dragged through the courts. Finally, the Minister should stop pretending to be lily white in this whole business, accept a heavy responsibility, and provide adequate funds for the proper protection of children in care.

Mrs. Bottomley: The right hon. Gentleman made several fair and valid points on matters that should be addressed by Staffordshire county council. However, I cannot accept his remarks about resources. This year, spending on social services departments has risen by 23·5 per cent.—the highest figure in 15 years. This year, there has been a 25 per cent. increase in the amount available through the training support programme, and a 40 per cent. increase in the amount available for social work training generally.

The key point about residential care is that, at a time when numbers have plummeted, local authorities have not properly taken stock of the new needs of the children in question. What will unite the House—it has come as a stark revelation to many in the country—is that children in

[Mrs. Bottomley]

residential care are in a particularly vulnerable and needy group. Of course local authorities are doing excellent work in increasing fostering, and in avoiding taking children into care. The figure for children in care used to be 90,000; it is now down to 60,000.

However, children requiring residential care are a difficult, disturbing, and troubled bunch of people. It is entirely unrealistic to expect youngsters in their very first jobs—perhaps with very big hearts but without the necessary skills—to take on such adolescents. Those working in local authority homes need to feel that they have the respect, support, recognition, and supervision of social services management. Too often, they have been left to their own devices, and there has been a singular failure by social services departments to live up to their responsibilities.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): While nothing can ever condone or excuse the kind of cruelty that the report reveals, and although resignations are certainly called for—the social services committee chairman ought properly to resign—we must recognise that some of the children involved were incredibly difficult. Social workers face a difficult task and a terrible challenge. Also, we are talking about a very small number of homes. Staffordshire has taken firm action—albeit belatedly. Its county council commissioned the report from Mr. Levy and published it immediately, and appointed—albeit also belatedly—a new and highly distinguished director of social services. We should put the matter in perspective and move forward on that basis.

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate my hon. Friend's remarks. Having got over the shock of the case in question, which arose from the sustained nature of the situation that faced those young children, there is no doubt that Staffordshire is learning the lessons. It has made the important appointment of a new director and has announced a number of measures to put its own house in order. I endorse my hon. Friend's point about the need for maturity and skill on the part of those undertaking such enormously difficult work. Also, it should be remembered that the report dealt with only four homes out of the 19 in Staffordshire; many social services staff in that county discharge their responsibilities effectively, and are equally appalled by the events that have come to light.

The Children Act 1989 provides a volume of binding regulations and guidance which will ensure that all residential children's homes abide by the proper procedures for recording, proper disciplinary measures, management, supervision, review, and the provision of an effective complaints procedure. With the implementation of that Act we will tackle the underlying problems. The report provides, in a sense, an opportunity for every local authority to review and consider its own practices.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will the Minister join me in congratulating Allan Levy and Barbara Kahan on their brilliant and exhaustive report into this horrific episode, in which children were subject to a wholly unacceptable regime? Does she agree that the decisions that led to the establishment of pindown owed everything to appalling ethical misjudgments by individuals and the lack of monitoring and supervision that she identified, but nothing to a lack of training?

Does the hon. Lady accept the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) made, that only one member of staff at 245 Hartshill road, where this started, had any training and no residential qualifications? Apart from initiating the pindown regime, those members of staff, often perhaps with good intentions, were subjecting children to regressive psychological techniques, taking them back to their moments of initial trauma when perhaps they were first abused, which are enormously dangerous even in the hands of trained psychiatrists and dynamite in the hands of unqualified people. I accept that, nationally, in the past year she has increased the money available for training, but much more is needed, because surely we cannot accept that any staff should be untrained if they are liable to make gross errors of judgment. Will she bear that in mind when Sir William Utting's report concludes, as it must, that more money is needed for training?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman, who has taken a detailed interest and has been deeply concerned in this throughout and who made a major contribution to the inquiry, is right about the origins of pindown. The report says that it

"is likely to have stemmed initially from an ill-digested understanding of behavioural psychology . . . The regime had no theoretical framework and no safeguards."

It also mentions

"the absence of any professional advice in dealing with many children"

and that the regime was

"in all its manifestations intrinsically unethical, unprofessional and unacceptable."

It was a deplorable episode.

Training is of great importance, particularly as so many social services staff seem to believe that they should gain experience in a children's home and work in the field. I shall not be content until our most skilled workers in the field say that the real job, skills and difficulty are experienced in children's homes. When we reverse that status and balance of priorities, we will have accomplished an important task.

With the establishment of the diploma of social work, which takes over from the CSS and CQSW, we are moving from two-tier social services training to training that is more unified. The establishment of national vocational qualifications and the great development of in-service training are important tools. The new Open University training material on young people, for which we provided funds of £750,000, is effective and useful. Training is of much importance, but so is the regard with which the work is treated and, above all, supervision and management from the department.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my hon. Friend confirm that no criticism has been made of staff at the admirable Riverside community home at Rocester, in my constituency? Will she also confirm that, although we hear strong speeches about how much Labour cares, Labour-controlled Staffordshire county council steadfastly refused to increase spending to give the priority necessary for child care in Staffordshire, with the result that it had the lowest level of child care in the country? Will she further confirm that that is evidence that social services would be better administered if control were taken from county councils and given to district councils, which, in organisational terms, are much closer to the communities that they serve?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall not embark on a review of local government structure and functions, but I can confirm that there is no suggestion that the Riverside home is in anything other than the condition that my hon. and learned Friend described.

The report is an indictment of the social services department, not only for the way in which children's home were managed but for the blinkered way in which children's services were regarded. For example, Staffordshire failed to increase remuneration for foster parents. Increasingly, good practice involves trying to establish children, even the more difficult and troublesome children, with foster parents. Foster parents often need not only support but better remuneration. Staffordshire singularly failed to think through that aspect.

In many ways, social service departments are making excellent progress in tackling child abuse and putting more rigorous procedures in place, but they have not considered the new role of residential care. It is almost as though they thought that it would wither on the vine as fostering became more prevalent. That is not true; it has a significant, important and difficult role.

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): No one who has read the report of Sir Allan Levy can be other than concerned about what took place in the four children's homes in Staffordshire, but I am trying to look for something positive from the report. I welcome the initiative of the county council in setting up the inquiry and the recommendations made in the report. I hope to see them well and truly implemented, not only in Staffordshire but nationally.

It is all too easy to use social workers as scapegoats. They constantly deal with the problems that society generally does not wish to know about and certainly does not wish to get involved with. As with cases of child care, they are the Cinderellas of services and are way down the list of additional provision. The Minister implied that social services resources were increased this year, but what about the years before that?

I welcome the report's recommendations and hope to see them implemented throughout the country, because undoubtedly supervision and the complaints procedures are of much importance. What is of concern is that neither middle nor senior management, nor Government inspectors, were able to highlight the difficulties and problems in those four homes. In looking for something positive, let us welcome the recommendations of the report and ensure that they are implemented not only in Staffordshire but throughout the country.

Mrs. Bottomley: I endorse the hon. Lady's point about using the report as an opportunity to ensure that, throughout the country, effective practices are properly introduced. There is the opportunity of the Children Act and the binding regulations that we are introducing this month. They mainly address the recommendations of the Levy report and the establishment of the complaints procedure.

I endorse the points made by the hon. Lady on reducing all incidents of this kind to a form of social work abuse, but the fact is that bad practice must be condemned, and this was the most deplorable example of bad practice and of lack of supervision and management. Staffordshire failed to re-evaluate the ethos of the home and its purpose, to scrutinise again the disciplinary procedures that are necessary and to review children. These children should have been having regular six-monthly reviews, there should have been proper recording of the disciplinary procedures and, perhaps most outrageous of all, under the secure accommodation guidelines, which we introduced in the early 1980s, this should not have been permitted without the authorisation of the Secretary of State.

Staffordshire failed to take advice, to manage and to follow the regulations. All those aspects are being addressed by Staffordshire and by the detailed regulations that we are introducing. The chief inspector's report will advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State whether any further steps can be taken to ensure good practice in children's homes and, above all, monitoring and inspection.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): The report is clearly an indictment of the way in which the Labour party has run social services in Staffordshire, and that action cannot be excused. Nevertheless, I emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) about the importance of putting this matter in context.

Will my hon. Friend confirm that the children with whom the report deals were taken into care in the first place because they were uncontrollable? Is she aware that constituents have come to me because the family centre in Cannock has been running amok? Children have been out late at night, running around the town, and social workers have had to get them. That is not a satisfactory state of affairs for social workers. Do not we need a disciplined regime of care for such children whereby they can be properly looked after and social workers are given the power to look after them properly and in a disciplined manner so that the rest of society may be protected from them?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. He has spoken to me about his worries about the situation in Staffordshire. Increasingly, these young people are older than children in residential homes were in the past, and they are pretty uncontrolled; they are difficult to control. The children's homes need a programme of care, control and activity. The deplorable position in Staffordshire meant that the young people were oppressively controlled and scarcely cared for, unlike the young people in Southwark, who were scarcely cared for and certainly not controlled. A balance of care, control and activity must underlie the principles of residential care.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I take the report seriously and am deeply distressed that my county council, Staffordshire, should be the council so rightly blamed in that report. The Birches home is in my constituency and it causes me great sorrow.

I should like to put it on record, however, that it is not true that nothing was done by local politicians to bring the county council to book. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and I visited Staffordshire county council as soon as we found out that something was going on in the homes, and we had a meeting at the highest level in the same week in which the solicitor, Kevin Williams, announced what was happening with pindown. I have had correspondence with Staffordshire county council—which I have in my hand —on what was to happen, and the council has been open and forthcoming. We did not go public, because we felt

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

that enough damage had already been done to too many children in Staffordshire, and that going to the press would be detrimental to them.

Will the Minister consider doing something for which we asked during the passage of the Children Bill—extending the training of social workers by a year? There should be an additional year's training for all social workers who have to deal with children, who are the most vulnerable members of society.

What does the hon. Lady intend to do about separating abused children from the criminal child element in children's homes? I wrote to her asking for additional money for Staffordshire county council to enable it to do that, but the reply was no. What will happen as a result of the report?

Mrs. Bottomley: I endorse the hon. Lady's point about the role played by Kevin Williams in drawing attention to this matter. It was as though there was a conspiracy of silence for many years among all involved before he took decisive and determined action to bring it to people's attention.

There has been a 40 per cent. increase over the past year in the amount of money that we have spent to extend the number of social workers brought into qualification and to promote post-qualification training and in-service training. I believe that there is a more effective approach—there should be in-service training for all social workers and post-qualification training for those with a special interest in a particular speciality. In staffing children's homes, special attention must be given to the ability, skill and experience of those undertaking the work, which is precisely what will be made clear in the guidance.

Staffordshire social services, as with other local authority social services, has had an increase of about 23 per cent. this year in the amount available to spend on social services. It is for Staffordshire to use its judgment as a local authority to give priority where it is due. Giving it to this needy group of children is certainly the priority that it would be advised to follow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I have called all the Staffordshire Members who are directly concerned with this matter. I shall allow questions on this important subject to continue for a further five minutes, but then we must move on to the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my hon. Friend agree that people want to know that regimes such as pindown will not recur? Will the welcome announcement about a statutory guidance circular lead to the Government publishing details wherever there are problems? Will the Government spare no effort in rooting out places where neglect occurs, whether those looking after young children or those looking after the elderly? Will my hon. Friend comment on rumours about neglect in some homes for the elderly in south London?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the last question is wide of the statement.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend asks about the steps being taken to avoid such problems ever occurring again. The statutory guidance spells out local authorities' duties to inspect their homes. This is the key element of local social service provision: local authorities have a duty, and they are entrusted, to act as good parents to the child. The additional safeguard of having a complaints procedure available to every child in care is the belt and braces of the policy. None of us must be anything other than vigilant to ensure that children do not suffer and are not neglected, particularly those children who are taken into care because of the abuse or distress that they have already suffered.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): We all want to do our best for children in care. Will the Minister join me in expressing thanks to one Staffordshire councillor, Councillor Christina Jebb, who for several years has called for and fought hard for an inquiry into pindown? In the knowledge that Councillor Michael Poulter kept information from other Staffordshire county councillors on the social services committee for more than six months with regard to the High Court action—an admission that he has already made—and in the light of the fact that, as recently as April 1990, the leader of the council publicly regretted the forced closure of pindown, will the Minister review the inquiry which she announced and instigate a full public inquiry? The people of that area and of other areas do not wish to know that there is any possibility of a cover-up in Staffordshire. We want to get to the bottom of what has happened there so that we can learn and can improve facilities across the whole country for young people in our care. We need a full independent inquiry.

Mrs. Bottomley: I note that the tribute in the report is paid above all to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) for his powerful and brave remarks to the inquiry. The report is an authoritative and clear document. Only the Liberal Democrats think that the answer to every problem is to have yet another public inquiry. We know the principles; we have the legislation; we have the regulations and the statutory controls. The purpose of the chief inspector's report is urgently to ensure that safeguards are in place so that children's homes are properly monitored and inspected.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I deplore what happened in Staffordshire. Will my hon. Friend assure my constituents that unruly youths in care will be kept properly secure? In Bolton, a 14-year-old, supposedly in the council's care, has been allowed to commit more than 40 offences, not to mention fathering a child himself.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend identifies the other equally vexatious matter of these difficult children tearing around the streets making their neighbours' lives a misery. It is fair to see these difficulties in that context. There are regulations covering secure accommodation, and young people should not be locked up for more than 72 hours without a court order. The real indictment is that Staffordshire failed to realise that it had effectively established secure accommodation. Once the units are established as secure accommodation, they must be inspected regularly by the social services inspectorate and special safeguards must be put in place. Nobody would disagree with my hon. Friend that such provision is definitely needed—it cannot be done by niceness alone.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): As the Minister will be aware, for many months I have been calling for a full national, independent inquiry into the circumstances of

children in residential care. I am concerned that, within social work circles, attitudes and behavioural patterns which are abhorrent to the rest of us have been established, are beginning to be accepted and are perhaps seen as inevitable, justifiably in some instances because of the very difficult children involved.

Will the Minister reconsider the decision to place the review in the hands of the social services inspectorate? Although the individuals involved might be very worthy —I do not doubt that for one moment—the attitudes prevalent in social work circles must be challenged and those people might not be sufficiently detached from what needs to be done on a national basis.

Mrs. Bottomley: It would be difficult to find any knowledgeable individual or source who did not have the highest regard for the professional integrity of Sir William Utting, the Secretary of State's chief professional adviser. I have no doubt that there is no one better placed to undertake the review, as he will before he retires. He steered through the Children Act 1989, he has advised successive Secretaries of State and has met with the absolute, unequivocal confidence of all Ministers with whom he has worked.

It is important to appreciate that the role of the social services inspectorate is not to inspect each and every social services provision—that is the clear, unequivocal responsibility of local authorities. If local authorities say that they are not up to the task and are unable to fulfil their social services obligations, that is another matter. That would be a most regrettable step, but they must be held to that inspection role. One aspect that the chief inspector may carefully consider is the role of the arm's-length inspection unit—to ensure that there is an arm's-length distance between the management of the homes and those involved in inspecting them. To decide whether there is anything more that the inspectorate can do nationally to strengthen that function my be one of the most productive aspects of his report.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Erskine Bridge Tolls Extension Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Companies (Fees) Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1206) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Welfare of Pigs Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the late start, I appeal to Front and Back-Bench Members to make brief contributions.

5.32 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I ask for the indulgence of the House to excuse me from my place during the wind-up debate for reasons that I have conveyed to the official Opposition spokesman.

This is a short Bill, but it has two important intentions. First, it is designed to strengthen our capping powers for 1992-93 so that we can ensure that all charge payers have the protection that they rightly expect against excessive local authority budgeting in the run-up to the new council tax. Secondly, the Bill provides the powers needed for the banding of domestic properties, which is the first essential step towards our objective of introducing the council tax from 1 April 1993.

The House will know that the Government already have powers to cap the expenditure of individual authorities where the budget of an authority exceeds £15 million. The original proposals assumed that a de minimis exemption of that sort would be appropriate.

There are two issues involved, and I intend to confront them at once. The first concerns the desirability of capping at all. The second raises the need to extend the provisions to all authorities. We are addressing only the second of these issues this afternoon, but it is worth rehearsing the arguments for the wider restraint as well as the narrower and new proposals.

I make no secret of my view that the most desirable arrangements would be those that relied on unfettered local accountability—I have said so many times—but such a system must be compatible with the responsibility of the Government for the overall management of the economy. Indeed, it must also be compatible with the Government's duty to protect citizens from the consequences of high spending authorities.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am sorry to intervene so early in my right hon. Friend's speech, but I am sure that he will understand why. Since 1972, I have had the gravest reservations about a Conservative Government introducing legislation that begins with the words "local government". Is he aware that East Dorset district council in my constituency, with which I discussed the Bill on Friday afternoon, is a small, well run local authority which does not qualify for any of the criticisms which have rightly been made against other authorities? The council's problem is the standard spending assessment. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that, before we get to the figures for next year, he will at least allow me the opportunity to discuss with him the SSA as it affects East Dorset?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I appreciate his strictures about local government finance

[Mr. Heseltine]

legislation. I hope that there is nothing personal in his observation, because I think that I have been personally associated with every one of the measures about which he is so concerned. I know how ardently he represents his constituents' interests, and I would always be prepared to talk to him about any matters that he wished to raise. The issue of SSAs is always a matter of controversy, because almost every authority feels that it does not get the most advantageous arrangements to suit it. However, whenever changes are made, someone wins and someone loses. It is our responsibility to consider these issues every year in the light of whatever information is available to us. My hon. Friend has my assurance that I shall talk to him about his concerns.

As I said, the ideal arrangement would be to leave accountability in the hands of local authorities, but that would have to be under a regime where the system was compatible with the Government's responsibility for the overall management of the economy. I learned those lessons when I listened to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—my predecessor in the 1970s—to take firm action to limit the expenditure of local authorities on current account for the first time since the war. There is no dispute in practice between the Government and the Opposition except when the Labour party finds itself in opposition.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): The Secretary of State will recall that the actions taken in the late 1970s related to the ceiling placed on the amount of central Government revenue at the disposal of local government, not to the raising and spending of local revenue within a local community. I should be grateful if he would tell me which macro-economic law or which economist—Friedmanite or otherwise—has ever suggested that the raising of revenue locally and the expenditure incurred locally has any macro-economic impact on central Government overall fiscal policy.

Mr. Heseltine: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman should raise such profound questions, as they did not seem to preoccupy his party when it was in office. Although, as he said, it certainly took powers to restrain the overall level of current account spending, where it had more specific powers on the capital programmes for housing and for water, it took direct decisions to reduce those capital programmes year after year.

The conditions to which both parties are attracted when in power can be met only if authorities budget within the broad guidelines set by national Government. The facts, unfortunately, speak for themselves. The Government had the highest hopes that increased accountability would lead to sensible and prudent budgeting by all local authorities. It is a disappointment that, in the event, that has not proved to be the case. It is a disappointment that some authorities have not chosen to budget responsibly. We are prepared to face the facts, however unpalatable. It gives me no pleasure to say that on the evidence, I am satisfied that strong capping powers are an essential aspect of any local government finance system.

What is the evidence? In England in 1990-91, authorities used the change to the new system as a smokescreen to hide vastly increased expenditure. In that year, spending rose by 13·5 per cent. and over the two-year period to April 1991, spending rose by more than one quarter. Such massive and unjustifiable increases could not be allowed to continue.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, as long as we perpetuate the system by which central Government effectively subsidise local government to such an extent, the means by which local government will become prudent are eroded? One will have true economy and thrift in local government only when local councillors have to raise locally £1 for every 100p they spend. The further that one gets away from that concept, the more remote is the prospect of true economy and thrift in local authorities.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion. However, if one were to examine the resources of some of the more hard-pressed authorities and their undeniable needs, it would be difficult to see how to square 100 per cent. of expenditure with 100 per cent. of local revenue. The Government take the view that there is a balance to be struck. We have changed the incidence of the balance very much for the better through my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget, but it is very much the Government's view that it is appropriate that local authorities should have some revenue-raising capacity of their own.

We saw substantial increases. Expenditure rose by more than one quarter in the two-year period to April 1991. For 1991-92, we acted and used our capping powers to achieve as much as possible by deterrence and as little as possible by capping. We told the authorities the capping criteria that we intended to use before they made their budget judgments and the results speak for themselves. In contrast to the previous year, English local authorities' spending is within 0·5 per cent. above the amount that we provided in our settlement. Of 39 county councils, 37 budgeted below the intended criteria. Of the 36 metropolitan districts, 35 budgeted below the intended criteria. Of the 33 London boroughs, 31 budgeted below the intended criteria. It is for those reasons that we have made it clear that we do not intend to be caught again. We intend under the new council tax to have strong and effective capping powers appropriate to the new system.

As the whole House knows, in the circumstances that I have described, our capping powers were not comprehensive. We could not cap authorities budgeting below £15 million however excessively such authorities might be budgeting. We were unable, for example, to protect the charge payers of Derwentside, a council whose overspending added £95 to the local community charge. We could not protect the charge payers of Harlow, where the council's excessive budgeting added £83 to the charge.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the Secretary of State remember the words of other Ministers about the good work of Derwentside in ensuring that it contributed to the regeneration of the area following the closure of the steelworks at Consett 10 years ago? Without the substantial contribution of the local authority, no money from Europe, from central Government or from the private sector would have been available.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady misses the point. Many authorities with SSAs broadly in line with that of Derwentside are perfectly able to come either below or

very close to the level of the SSA. All local authorities have individual cases to plead. The fact is that varying circumstances can be used to generalise in each case to show that it is perfectly possible for local authorities prudently to deliver an adequate service at the SSA levels set by the Government.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): My right hon. Friend referred to small spending authorities. Wealden district council is a small and prudent spending authority. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is some concern among such authorities about the effect of the Government's capping proposals? A small spending authority, such as Wealden, can find that, for reasons completely beyond its control—one-off spending, for example, because of Government legislation which imposes considerable public spending increases and may only be for a year or two—it is included, because of the percentage increase, in the capping arrangements. That is unfair for councils that have a prudent record and which are capped because of a one-off item of expenditure.

Mr. Heseltine: I fully understand the point that my hon. Friend makes so eloquently. However, he will know that the capping mechanism is immensely sensitive. First, authorities know in advance the standards that the Government have laid down. Secondly, they can make representations and thirdly, they have an appeal to the Secretary of State. Exceptional circumstances are very much considered in any Government action——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Including Wandsworth?

Mr. Heseltine: Wandsworth does not need exceptional circumstances consideration. It is a thoroughly well-run authority.

As I have made clear, the existence of the £15 million de minimis rule left a number of authorities able to add significantly to the community charge level in their area without the Government being able to protect charge payers. Indeed, almost 40 authorities in England with budgets below £15 million this year overspent their SSA by £26 per adult and more, which translates directly into an extra £26 or more on the charge. Yet we could do nothing under current statute. We could not step in to protect local people from the consequences of that excessive spending.

There were clear examples of authorities deliberately setting the budget at a point marginally below £15 million to keep out of the capping regime. Thurrock and Maidstone are examples. It may have been a coincidence —although I find that difficult to believe—that put £50 on the bills of the people of Thurrock and £32 on the bills of local people in Maidstone.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) have pointed out, many small authorities are economical and prudent, and I do not have the slightest doubt that they will remain so. They have nothing to fear from the Bill. Authorities that keep to prudent levels of expenditure will enjoy the full benefit of adequate service delivery with reasonable charges. However, the House will realise that the two new and related arguments that we now have give an urgency to the actions that we propose.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Although I recognise that this matter is the responsibility not of the Secretary of State, but of the Scottish Office, may I ask for an explanation from the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, when he winds up the debate, about why the prudent authority in Lothian, which spends markedly less than Dumfries and Galloway, the authority of the Secretary of State for Scotland—we should consider every criterion of fairness and rectitude—should be punished in an uncalled for, vindictive and devastating way? May we have an explanation about Lothian?

Mr. Heseltine: I can produce instant satisfaction for the hon. Gentleman. He will be given the most eloquent and intellectually coherent explanation when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland winds up the debate this evening.

The House will realise that two new and related arguments give urgency to the action that we are discussing this afternoon. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has provided substantial help for charge payers this year. As a result, the contribution of local taxation to the funding of local government spending in Great Britain has fallen from 25 per cent. in 1990-91 to 14 per cent. for 1991-92.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has also set out our determination to maintain the new and lower proportion of locally raised contribution. It is apparent that the new arrangements lead to a particularly high gearing for overspending. Every 1 per cent. of overspending is equivalent on average to 7 per cent. on charges. Hon. Members could say that that will be its own deterrent. But my right hon. Friend's generosity undermines that argument. He has enabled local authorities to reduce their headline community charge by £140. It would be folly indeed to allow authorities to erode this benefit for so many people by overspending.

This year our legislation ensured that the extra money went straight to the charge payers themselves because we waited until local authorities had set their budgets before we announced the new scheme. But that option is not open for us for the coming year. We must therefore anticipate the risk that the Chancellor's generosity might be frittered away. To prevent that is the purpose of the first part of this legislation. It is for those reasons that we seek to strengthen our capping powers next year by bringing authorities which budget below £15 million into the scope of capping, and by bringing the powers to cap Scottish authorities into line with the more extensive powers which are available in England and Wales.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Would the Secretary of State care to tell the House which Scottish local authorities he considers to be extravagant and to spend too much of poll tax payers' money?

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has been eloquent on that subject on many occasions. I have not the slightest doubt that I do not need to add to the graphic descriptions that he has provided. However, if the hon. Lady persists in her questioning, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will give a most coherent answer and specify a long list of such authorities when he replies to the debate.

I turn now to the provisions of the Bill. Clause 1 will remove the £15 million——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for interrupting,

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

but I am extremely intrigued about how the Secretary of State for the Environment will discuss in detail a Bill which has seven clauses, only two of which apply specifically to England and Wales, three of which apply specifically to Scotland and two of which are shared. How can he entertain the House with a graphic description of the detail of the Bill when he persists in telling us that all questions about Scotland will be deferred until the reply to the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, I shall answer his question specifically. The first answer is on clause 2 which deals with Scotland and will bring the Scottish capping powers into line with those in England and Wales. Experience has shown that the existing powers have proved inadequate given local authorities' lack of regard for the interests of their charge payers. Yet under the present legislation, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has taken action against only one authority. That authority has been referred to already. It is Lothian regional council. My right hon. Friend took action against only one authority notwithstanding that Scottish authorities chose to increase their charges by an average of 30 per cent. That outrageous increase was despite a very fair grant settlement of 10·4 per cent. which should have enabled local authorities to keep charges at reasonable levels.

Clause 2 will amend the Scottish capping powers, thus enabling my right hon. Friend to take capping action where he is satisfied that an authority's planned expenditure is excessive or that there is an excessive increase in such planned expenditure compared with the previous year. With these amendments for the first time my right hon. Friend will be able to take action against excessive increases in budgets. My right hon. Friend will also for the first time be able to set out the principles or criteria by reference to which he will take his capping decisions.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State says that, for the first time, the Secretary of State for Scotland will be able to take action against excessive increases in budgets. Will he explain why that was not possible under section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966? The Secretary of State has smoothly referred to the increase in the community charge, but will he tell us the increase in local authority expenditure in the same period?

Mr. Heseltine: I do not remember any 1966 Act. I thought that the position was clear and that the Labour party had not introduced specific capping measures. Any measures that we introduced must have come in the 1980s and I was not asked questions about them.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman before.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the Secretary of State will remember that the foundation legislation in which powers to take action against excessive and unreasonable expenditure are taken is section 5 of the 1966 Act. Of course, that Act has been amended many times. I ask the Secretary of State to explain the exact change in terms of the excessive expenditure of a threatened authority. Will he also answer the other question? When he says that excessive increases in expenditure are important, will he give the excessive increase last year in the expenditure of Scottish local authorities?

Mr. Heseltine: I have given the figures for the increased expenditure of local authorities and the effect on their charges. In our view, it was excessive and unacceptable. For that reason, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has decided to bring the powers in Scotland into line with the powers in England.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the position that arises out of the 1966 legislation. However, the capping provisions were introduced under this Government some 20 years later. So it is not realistic to think that the Labour Government in 1966 ever sought to constrain Scottish local authorities under the type of legislative controls that we are discussing. If they did—*[Interruption.]* I do not know what the fuss is about, or why the Labour party constantly carps about what we are doing. I hope that the Labour party will vote with my hon. Friends and me in the Lobby because apparently we have reached unanimity about the need to cap Scottish local authorities.

This Bill therefore, if approved, will strengthen our capping powers for 1992-93. It is our intention, as this year, to announce in advance the capping criteria that we intend to adopt. We are seeking rapid enactment of this measure so that our capping powers are clear before we come to make that announcement in the autumn and before authorities come to consider their budgets. All authorities will know before they take their budget decisions what are our intentions for capping. Neither my right hon. Friends nor I are seeking next year to cap large numbers of authorities. It is our hope that authorities will choose to budget sensibly. But let there be no doubt that we shall not hesitate to cap any authority which budgets excessively or budgets for an excessive increase and thus burdens its charge payers. With our new powers, if this Bill is approved, charge payers everywhere will have the protection which they have the right to expect.

Clauses 3 to 6 of the Bill deal with valuation and are the first step towards our objective of introducing a council tax from 1 April 1993. We published our consultation paper on the new council tax to replace the community charge on 23 April. I told the House that there would be no need for precise valuations of every house or flat for the council tax.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, we are short of time and I must get on with this section of my speech.

Instead, our plans for the council tax involved allocating properties to one of seven broad bands. The Bill provides the necessary powers. I remind the House that under the scheme that we have proposed, people in the lowest band of property will pay two thirds of those in a property in the middle band in the area. People in a highest band property will pay two thirds more than those in the middle band in the area. That means that, in each case, a household in a highest band property will pay two and a half times as much as one in the lowest band.

We are committed to avoiding the very high bills which discredited the rates.

Dr. Godman: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

This year, on the assumptions that we set out, a council in England which spent at the standard level——

Dr. Godman: With his usual courtesy, will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Heseltine: A council which spent at the standard level would have charged a household of two or more people in a top band property no more than £668 and such a household in a lowest band home no more than £267.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. Clause 3 deals with the assessment by local assessors of the value of domestic properties in Scotland. Does the Secretary of State intend to say anything about a right of appeal? Will such a right be part of the extant Scottish legal system or will an independent appeals tribunal be created in Scotland?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. There will be a right of appeal. As the hon. Gentleman knows, assessors in Scotland come within the local government system, which is different from the arrangements for England. The Bill contains special arrangements to deal with that contingency and, particularly, to make grants available to local authorities in Scotland to meet the additional expenditure involved.

There are specific provisions for Scotland, and certainly there will be a right of appeal in Scotland as there will be in England and Wales.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that that will be a matter of discussion later in the debate, but the right hon. Gentleman will know that there has been much curiosity in Scotland about clause 5(3) which states:

"A local assessor shall comply with such directions as may be given by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue."

In Scotland, the assessor has always been an independent authority, and I am anxious to know what those directions might be.

Mr. Heseltine: That is an important point; there should be parity of valuation in Scotland, England and Wales. It is our intention for the Inland Revenue to mastermind the valuation exercise, using assessors in Scotland. It is important that it should be possible for the Inland Revenue to give appropriate directives so that the Scottish valuations are in line with those in England and Wales. That is the purpose of the exercise.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend will remember that when we debated the community charge legislation a lot of his hon. Friends supported it on the basis that we thought it would be introduced at a relatively low level. In the event, it came in 50 or 60 per cent. higher than we anticipated.

My right hon. Friend has just said that, on his calculations, when the council tax is introduced—bearing in mind the fact that people spend according to needs and are effective and efficient in their use of resources—the tax levels reached will be acceptable to his hon. Friends. Will my right hon. Friend say how confident he is that the council tax will be restricted to those levels?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will want to join me with enthusiasm in the Lobby tonight. It is precisely because we do not want to get caught again that we now have comprehensive capping arrangements to prevent the Labour party from frittering away the benefits that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made available in his recent Budget.

Taken together with the personal discount, this year households with one adult would have paid no more than £501 in the top band and no more than £200 in the lowest band. People on low incomes will receive rebates in addition to any discounts to which they are entitled and there will be no minimum contribution to the council tax. It will be seen, and it has already been seen by public opinion, as a fair tax and much to be welcomed.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Does my right hon. Friend not think that there is a logical case for introducing the council tax at the same time as local government reform or for bringing local government reform forward to coincide with the introduction of the council tax in those areas which have already had the benefit of a Boundaries Commission recommendation? Will he confirm that the discretion on the 50 per cent. reduction rebate for second homes will remain with local authorities and not be taken by central Government? I was robust in ensuring that all my second-home owners paid a full charge and were not subsidised by the local community. Will he also confirm that 100 per cent. rebates will be available when necessary because that has been a particular problem with the community charge?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has asked a number of questions. We have made it clear that there will be a comprehensive rebate system and that there will not be a minimum assumption as under the community charge arrangements. Our arrangements for empty properties have also been made clear. They will be subject to two personal discounts, and that will be a standard arrangement across the country and without discretion.

My hon. Friend also asked about the possibility of phasing in the new council tax. I do not think that that would be practical or, frankly, desirable. I believe that people want to see the council tax in place at the earliest possible opportunity, which we believe to be 1993. The phasing of the structural changes to local government will start in 1994 and will follow on from that. It would not be appropriate to wait for that to coincide with financial changes and there would be a great deal of pressure on us to introduce the community charge replacement scheme in 1993 as we intend.

Mr. Adley: I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend again. It sounds as though there will be a perpetual motion of changes to local government finance and local government boundaries. That causes some concern.

The Association of District Councils seems to be encouraging chief executives to tell their Members of Parliament that, whatever the Government's intentions, there will be a need to establish a register for the council tax. Will my right hon. Friend disabuse us of that proposition? Will he say a little more about how rebates

[Mr. Adley]

can be claimed? Will he do his best to ensure that that information is disseminated as widely as possible? How will he go about that?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will understand that they are matters for the principal legislation, which will be introduced in the autumn. When I made my first announcement to the House, I made it clear that we did not see the need for a register to make the system workable. One of the attractions of a broad banding system is to avoid the need for a register. I believe that that was widely welcomed when I made that announcement.

Details on the specific nature of the rebate system will be announced in good time for people to understand them and to make comments on them as we move towards legislation. They are not covered by the narrow and specific Bill that we are debating today.

The provisions in the Bill will enable progress to be made as soon as possible towards the new system we decide upon after considering the suggestions put to us during consultation. The provisions are enabling provisions covering two crucial aspects of preparation for a new property-based council tax.

First, they provide the power for the allocation of domestic properties to bands to be carried out—that is a power to prescribe principles for the exercise in regulations. Secondly, they ensure access to the information needed to ensure that the allocation is soundly based. There are tough safeguards on the use that can be made of that information.

We have made no secret of our intention that private sector valuers should undertake much of the work involved in the valuation. This will be effective and economical. It will ensure speedy action and, most of all, it will make use of the great expertise available in the profession which it must be right for us to tap. I can, however, assure the House that the overall process of valuation will be supervised by the commissioners of Inland Revenue to ensure the uniformity of treatment that is essential if the valuation is to be fair and sound.

I have already described how those provisions interrelate with those for Scotland where the assessors will be responsible for carrying out valuation. The expertise which they have accumulated in undertaking large-scale valuation exercises makes them well placed to do the job promptly and thoroughly. It is important that the valuation task is tackled consistently throughout Great Britain, and the commissioners of Inland Revenue are given a power—which hon. Members have mentioned—of direction to ensure that consistency in Scotland. The assessors already work with the Inland Revenue valuation office to achieve consistent treatment of non-domestic valuations, and this collaboration will now be extended to the domestic sector.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I have already given way three times to the hon. Gentleman.

As the assessors are local government employees the clause empowers the Secretary of State for Scotland to pay local authorities' grant towards the assessors' costs. In other respects, the provisions for Scotland follow the parallel English provisions.

Clause 4, for England and Wales, and clause 6, for Scotland, enable those carrying out the valuation to obtain the information necessary to do so. Information is a sensitive subject, and I would particularly draw the attention of the House to the protection we have built into the Bill. In particular, clause 3(6) provides that disclosure of information obtained for the purpose of valuation could lead to imprisonment or a heavy fine, or both. I cannot stress too highly the importance that we attach to securing that the information which is obtained as part of this exercise is used properly and only for the purpose for which it has been provided.

We have set out our firm intention of introducing a council tax on 1 April 1993 and have been advised that to do so requires urgent action if the preparations are to be made properly. We have listened and have brought before the House practical measures which will result in a fair and soundly based system of local government finance operative from 1 April 1993.

The Bill prepares the way for the introduction of the council tax. By strengthening our capping powers, we can be confident that expenditure will be restrained and that charges will be at acceptable levels. We are now bringing forward serious practical measures designed to secure our firm objective of introducing a fair and practical council tax from April 1993.

6.10 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The only remarkable feature of the otherwise unremarkable speech that we have just heard is the fact that it was the Secretary of State made it. After all, he has shown a marked reluctance to come to the Dispatch Box to spell out his views on capping. Just two days before the Whitsun recess, he ducked out of the capping order debate and delegated it to his Minister of State. He originally intended that this measure, too, should be handled by his junior Ministers. At least this time we have shamed the right hon. Gentleman into coming to the Dispatch Box to explain the measure, but his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland does not appear to be present.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is not usually a shrinking violet—he does not normally shun the limelight. That leaves us puzzled about why he has shown uncharacteristic reluctance and reticence, an impression that was reinforced by his speech today, in which he scarcely concealed his distaste for some of the proposals that he had to put forward. We are also puzzled about why he has been prepared to show that he has little enthusiasm for the measure.

The most likely explanation is that the Bill represents a series of defeats. It is a compendium of the defeats that the Secretary of State has suffered at the hands of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister. As a consequence, he regards the Bill as an embarrassing record of his failures and therefore feels little commitment to it. Indeed, he feels antipathy for some of the provisions.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I wish to complete this point.

The fact that the Secretary of State does not mind who knows his position speaks volumes for his relationship with the Prime Minister. Even his speech this evening can only fuel speculation that, in common with the rest of the

country, the right hon. Gentleman has decided that the Prime Minister's days are numbered and that he does not mind whether his conclusion becomes public knowledge.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman spoke of embarrassment. As he is on record as saying that he approves of capping and also that he does not approve of it, will he share his embarrassment with us and say which of those alternatives he supports?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is pushing his luck; there is little doubt about our position, which has been established on many occasions and which I am happy to repeat now. We oppose wholeheartedly and thoroughly the principle of capping and, as we advocate the independence and value of local government, we believe that the right controls over local government spending are those exercised by the electorate through the ballot box.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I shall give way in a moment.

It is not surprising that the Secretary of State is less than enthusiastic for the Bill.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is on record as having said that, in extremis, there must always be a reserve power. Is it in order for him now to say that he said no such thing?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a matter for debate, not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Gould: It is not surprising that the Secretary of State is less than enthusiastic about the Bill. After all, its first objective is a massive and comprehensive extension of capping powers, something against which the Secretary of State has consistently—at least he has been consistent on that issue—set his face. The Bill achieves nothing short of the universal capping which the right hon. Gentleman proclaimed, in his famous article in *The Times* on 10 May last year, would be

"an act of centralised power outside our experience. On those grounds alone it should be resisted."

The mere fact that the Secretary of State has nailed his colours to that mast does not mean that he will not chop it down at the first opportunity. After all, he cannot pass a revolving door without spending a couple of enjoyable turns within it.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop this point, I shall give way in a moment.

It is significant that, despite his U-turns and climbdowns, the Secretary of State has so far not recanted on that subject. His enthusiasm for the position that he has taken has been consistently maintained, as he has showed this evening. On this measure, he has been clear and vehement. In his article in *The Times*, he virtually issued a call to arms in defence of local government independence. Little wonder that he is so reluctant to have to eat those words and to introduce universal capping, which he so eloquently condemned in that article.

Mrs. Currie: We should all like to know the hon. Gentleman's views on capping. I heard him say, on the "Today" programme on Radio 4, on 27 March 1990, that, in extremis, there would have to be a reserve power. Does he still think so? If not, how on earth does he propose to control public spending and inflation?

Mr. Gould: The Labour party is opposed, and always has been, to the principle of capping. We would control local government spending through the discipline exercised by the ballot box, which we would ensure was more effective because of our provision for annual elections.

Mr. Heseltine: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend's questions. What did the hon. Gentleman mean by the words "in extremis"?

Mr. Gould: If the right hon. Gentleman really wants me to spell it out, I am glad to do so. I was answering a question that was put in such terms as to suggest that no legal controls could ever be exercised over local government spending. The point that I was making was that, in extremis, in cases of illegality or fraud, a reserve power would always be available. Anyone who understands local government would accept that point.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman remembers George Bernard Shaw's well-known phrase, "We have established the principle; we are now haggling about the terms."

Mr. Gould: I happen to know the full story, but it is clear from the frozen reactions of the Secretary of State's colleagues that not many of them do. I am sorry that he failed to make his point.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I wish to make progress; I shall bear the hon. Gentleman in mind.

By eating his words even on capping—the one issue on which he steadfastly maintained his position for well over a year—the Secretary of State presents a sad spectacle. He is embarrassed not only because he is now forced to act inconsistently with his stirringly stated principle, but also because he knows that he was right on 10 May 1990 and he is wrong now.

No Secretary of State who claims to value local government can come to the House and proclaim that henceforth every budget for every local authority must be set within limits prescribed by central Government. However, that is the sad end of a long process that began a long time ago—it certainly seems so—with fine words that many hon. Members will remember about the poll tax reinforcing local democracy and imposing renewed accountability. The process then took refuge in a limited capping power, which the Secretary of State said was designed to restrain the largest overspenders. That process has now been swept away, and all pretence has gone that the Government are interested even in paying lip service to the principle of local government autonomy.

Let us be clear what the Bill is about. It is no longer a question of restraining the largest authorities or the most irresponsible overspenders or even—this is the point for the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—those Labour-controlled authorities so beloved of Tory mythology. The Bill is a comprehensive statement of no confidence in the whole of local government. It does not matter how big the authority is, what its record on

[Mr. Gould]

spending might be or what its political control is or has been. All local authorities are now on notice that they are not to be trusted.

Under the new powers, every budget will be set within the limits imposed by the Secretary of State. Let us be clear on how extensive those powers will be. If the £15 million protection had not been in force for 1991-92, 37 districts would have spent more than 25 per cent. above their standard spending assessment, 42 would have been spending 20 per cent. above their SSA, and 55 would have spent 12·5 per cent. above their SSA. On the criteria applied for this year, huge numbers of local authorities would have had to be capped, including many Tory-controlled smaller districts.

So much for local democracy and the power of local electors to decide what services they want and what they are willing to pay for them. Henceforth, the man in Whitehall knows best. It is far from clear on what basis his judgment is to be made. Is it to be made on the basis of SSAs, which everyone now knows to be unrealiable, in which confidence is completely lacking and which, in the case of small authorities, even Ministers conceded during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, provided too blunt an instrument to fine-tune the budgets of small authorities? Is that to be the basis of the judgment imposed from Whitehall, or is it to be a criterion that measures a year-on-year increase in spending? If so, the Secretary of State may well find himself capping many districts that have restrained their spending to lower than the SSA.

The process is the apotheosis of that centralising power that the Secretary of State described. It is not an exaggeration to say that it will be the end of local government as we have known it for more than a century, until that happy day comes when we can get rid of the Government who have imposed the dead hand of Whitehall on local democracy.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is saying that, under his policy, the ballot box will be arbiter. If that is so —I believe that he will accept that in some authorities 20 to 25 per cent. of the electorate pay nothing; indeed, there are some authorities where about 80 per cent. did not pay the full rates—where on earth is the democracy? How is it democratic for that percentage of people to vote for an ever smaller number of people to pay more and more in totally unlimited spending within a local authority?

Mr. Gould: In the light of the local government election results last month, I can well understand why the hon. Gentleman is nervous about the judgment of voters at the ballot box. The answer to his question has been most eloquently provided by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who said—I do not have his exact words, but I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will remember them —that it was a complete myth to assume that large numbers of people did not pay the rates. He said that virtually everyone made some contribution, perhaps under an informal arrangement within a household or as part of a rent payment.

I hope that the Secretary of State will not do a cartwheel on that, because I have always thought that he was right on that issue, and has stuck to being right. It was a well-taken point in favour of rates and a property tax, and in view of the wholesale conversion among Conservatives who now condemn the poll tax, I am surprised that the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) has not caught up with the new orthodoxy.

The fact that the Secretary of State has doubts and hesitations about capping is eminently understandable and is no doubt matches by his reservations on the Bill's second major objective—the preparations that it makes for the council tax. It enables the Secretary of State to give instructions to valuers so that a new valuation register can be prepared. The Bill's provisions must surely be an embarrassment to any Government who still pretend to be competent. We are still no nearer to knowing what the basis of that valuation will be. We have been told by the Secretary of State that it will be solely capital values.

We were then told by the Minister of State on the Radio 4 "Today" programme, of which Conservative Members are such avid listeners, that other factors might also be taken into account. When we challenged the Secretary of State in the House on which of the conflicting views was correct, he said that they both were. The Bill does nothing to clear up that confusion. That is surely one of the questions on which the process of consultation is intended to cast light, so why not wait until the consultation has taken place?

The answer to that question reveals another Government embarrassment. They have to give the impression of making rapid progress to deflect the widespread scepticism about the timetable that they have set for themselves. The Government still say that they are aiming for 1993, despite the experts' publicly stated doubts about whether that date is remotely achieveable. Only by going through the motions can the Government keep alive —at least until the election—the illusion that the poll tax is rapidly on its way out. That illusion matters, because the poll tax, far from being dead, lives on and will be here for years to come.

Already, there is widespread anger on the part of nearly half of all poll tax payers as they discover that they do not qualify for the full £140 reduction that they were promised. That anger will mount as people realise that the poll tax bills will keep coming, they will still have to live with the unfairness and unworkability of the tax and, for each year during which it survives, they will have to pay, on average, £140 per household more than they need.

That is to say nothing of the nightmare facing local government as it grapples with the problems of collecting a tax that the Prime Minister describes as already uncollectable, and which can only become more so the longer it lingers. That is why the Government have to pretend to a certainty that certainly does not exist, and why they have had to truncate the process of consultation, revealing it to be the sham that it truly is.

While I am talking about truncating processes, I understand that we are to be subjected to a guillotine motion next week for the purpose of rushing the Bill through. I give notice that we shall oppose that motion with all the strength at our command.

Another vexed question involves the number and range of the bands. The Bill specifies that it is intended that valuations should be made on the basis of bands, but it does not say how many. It does not state whether individual valuations will first be made and then assigned to bands, or whether the exercise will simply push whole chunks of property into certain bands. Whatever the

answer, we should be clear that, contrary to the optimistic noises from Ministers, there is the prospect of huge numbers of appeals when people feel that they have been placed in the wrong band.

Or course, the Government have committed themselves outside the terms of the Bill to a seven-band system, on the basis of which they have produced some figures—the Secretary of State used them again this evening—which purport to tell people the size of the bills that they will have to pay. It is worth rehearsing for a moment the history of this disreputable exercise.

At the end of February, the Government set in train an exercise that required district valuers to make an estimate —no field work was done, no valuations would be carried out—in the course of about five days which would allocate all the properties in their areas to one of 14 bands, the top band of which was £500,000 or more. Once that exercise had been done on that very shaky basis, it was presumably taken by the Secretary of State to Cabinet. When the Cabinet and the Prime Minister saw it, they did not like it: they threw it out. They insisted on substantial change, and the Secretary of State suffered yet another of his defeats.

The Prime Minister insisted that a 14-band system would be too painful for well-heeled Tory supporters, especially in the south, and he further insisted that a seven-band system, with a new top band of only £160,000, should be substituted. None of the seven bands then defined corresponded with any of the 14 bands delineated in the earlier exercise. So we are left with a 14-band exercise based on guesstimates which were then translated into seven wholly different bands——

Mrs. Currie: So what?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Lady reveals a great deal about the psychology of Conservative Members, and thereby invalidates the very figures that the Secretary of State advanced this evening to try to persuade people that the council tax would somehow produce lower bills.

We are left, as I said, with a series of inventions based on estimates. It is on the basis of these wholly fanciful statistical inventions that the Government have produced their supposed figures for average bills. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the Government were panic-stricken, not to say gobsmacked, and were so intent on producing any figures, however wild the assumptions on which they were based, that they rushed out figures based on total invention.

Mrs. Currie: I think that I am right in saying that the hon. Gentleman has even less experience of government that I have. Had he any experience of government, he would know that the intelligent, sensible way for Government to go about their business is to invite papers from their civil servants and to discuss various possibilities. That is exactly what the Government did. Does he not consider that a matter not for criticism but of great credit to the Government?

Mr. Gould: I do not want to be too cruel to the hon. Lady, but I think that, in the light of her record in government, she would do well to be a little less patronising. I suspect that, if we compared experiences in a year or two, we might find that the balance had changed somewhat.

The hon. Lady does not understand why a 14-band exercise which was abandoned and converted to a seven-band exercise without proper valuation cannot be a sound basis for the figures that the Government have produced. But worse was to follow. Presumably because he knew how shaky was the statistical structure to which he had been shackled, the Secretary of State then tried to have a proper exercise carried out. District valuers were asked to carry out a nine-band exercise. But when news of that leaked within a couple of days, it was hastily aborted and the seven bands were pronounced to be the Government's last word on the subject. Consultation was at an end—again revealed as a total sham.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Gould: No, I have given way frequently.

So the Government were panicked into inventing figures, and were then so terrified by the prospect of being charged with trying to produce verification for them—so terrified of being accused of dithering—that they panicked all over again and closed their minds altogether.

Little wonder, then, that the Government have a reputation for panicking and for mistaking panic reaction for firm Government. Where the Home Secretary went with pit bull terriers, this Secretary of State had been before him with the council tax——

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I will conclude shortly.

Worse was to come, because the Government were now committed to seven bands with a £160,000 ceiling, and committed to the fundamental unfairness that that makes inevitable. I know that Ministers—especially the chairman of the Tory party—sometimes have difficulty in understanding this simple arithmetical point, but the fact is that an insistence on lopping off the top range of bands so that those at the top end of the scale do not pay their fair proportionate share, means, as a matter of logic, that those lower down the scale have to pay more. That is why, the Government's panic-stricken attempt to produce favourable-looking figures notwithstanding, they ended up—despite all the stastical inventions that they had felt free to use—with figures which still showed, for reasons that they clearly did not understand, that even on the most favourable assumptions their bills would be £67 per household higher on average than they would be under our fair rates proposal.

This is a sorry story of a Government who have abandoned all principle and all claim to competence. They have abandoned all pretence at considered policy-making. This Bill, like so many recent measures, is nothing more than a save-the-Government's-skin measure—but this is a Government whose skin is not worth saving.

They are a Government who require the Secretary of State to come to the Dispatch Box to defend a banding system which he knows to be indefensible, and who compel him to repudiate his own statements against universal capping. I do not blame the right hon. Gentleman for appearing to be unhappy about this humiliation. The poll tax has continued to exercise its malign influence and to cast its long shadow. I recommend that hon. Members share the Secretary of State's real judgment of the measure, and defeat this disreputable Bill tonight.

6.37 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): It is clear from what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has said that the one thing that really annoys the Labour party is that its members can see that the Government have produced a proposal that is popular in the country and which will lead to lower bills for our constituents. No wonder the hon. Gentleman is disappointed about that. I am disillusioned with him. When one hears him on the "Today" programme occasionally, he seems to be the voice of the Labour party speaking ex cathedra, yet today we have been told that what he said on that programme was inaccurate. I understand him to be saying that in no circumstances short of fraud would he introduce—were he to be in power—any capping measures. So again the message goes out from this House that the Labour party, if in office, would do little or nothing to protect people in peril of overspending authorities.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Can the right hon. Gentleman think offhand of any good reason why he, with his substantial personal wealth and large properties, should pay only two and a half times more than the poorest people? Why should the poor subsidise him?

Mr. Channon: I have no comment to make on that except to say that I pay—rightly—a great deal more in tax than many others do.

The House should understand that this measure represents two modest steps forward. One relates to valuation. It seems to me right to press ahead with that, because, if we do not, how shall we get the tax ready for its introduction in 1993? Surely both sides of the House want lower bills for constituents.

The council tax seems to have been a satisfactory way out of the problem. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State deserve the highest credit for the way in which they have managed to defuse this issue in the past few months—*[Laughter.]* Despite the laughter of Opposition Members, I do not believe that the issue was thought to be significant in the recent local elections.

Great credit goes to my right hon. and hon. Friends for having come up with a solution to the problems of local government taxation that seems to be satisfactory, or as satisfactory as anything can be. No local tax will ever be popular, and no local tax is likely to be perfect. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was entirely right to alter the balance between the levels of central Government and local government spending in his Budget.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Channon: We have been asked to be brief, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. It is probably the last time that I shall give way this evening.

Mr. McKay: The right hon. Gentleman thinks that it is right to get the balance right between the levels of central Government and local government spending. He thinks that the measures that have been taken will result in the right balance being achieved. Why was it right in the first place to destroy the balance that then existed by cutting grants to local government from central Government? The cutting of grants year in and year out caused the imbalance.

Mr. Channon: On reflection, I think that the hon. Gentleman has a point. It is right that central Government should be responsible for a larger share of the expenditure, but both Conservative and Labour Governments are to blame. As I have said, the hon. Gentleman is on to a sound point.

The council tax has been designed so that it will not place an excessive burden on those who will have to pay it in future. The authority that has responsibility in my constituency spends close to its standard spending assessment, as does the county council and I estimate that about 93 per cent. of householders in my constituency will be better off under the council tax than they were under the poll tax or the rating system.

I cannot understand the opposition to the Bill, which will enable the new tax to come into force in 1993. If that is to be done, the process of valuation must begin as soon as possible. That being so, I wish to ask a couple of questions.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Channon: I must press on. I shall speak for only a few more minutes.

I wish to ask two questions about the process of valuation. First, how do my right hon. and hon. Friends propose to deal with appeals? Secondly, although I understand the view that we do not need revaluation, surely there are certain portions of our towns and cities in which values vary considerably from time to time. Certainly there have been variations during the past few years. How are anomalies to be avoided if there is no general revaluation? I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland has the answers to my questions. I shall be grateful——

Mr. Barry Field: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there should be a regular revaluation every five years, for example, to avoid anomalies?

Mr. Channon: I am against regular revaluations. The process of revaluation is extremely time-consuming and enormously unpopular among those who lose as a result. If regular revaluations can be avoided, that is good on the whole. There will be exceptional circumstances from time to time, and I am not sure how the Bill will deal with those. No doubt the solution will come later, and it is necessary to have the Bill first. As I have said, I estimate that 93 per cent. of my constituents will be better off with the new tax.

The Bill deals only with valuation—we must press ahead with that so that the council tax can be ready in 1993—and capping. The official Opposition have explained their position with more clarity than they have done in the past. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that, in an ideal world, it would be better if there were no capping. Equally, it would be better if all local authorities behaved responsibly. Of course it would be better if all local authorities did not impose excessive burdens on ratepayers or charge payers. Alas, that is not the world in which we live. It is right that capping powers have been taken in the past. It is right that such powers should be used, but not excessively. It is right that early notice was given, so that local authorities knew exactly where they stood. It is right also that, at the end of the day, only very few authorities had to be capped.

I do not want to go into the details of all the district authorities that are at risk because of the removal of the

£15 million threshold. Every hon. Member will have specialist knowledge of his constituency. Surely it must be right, however, that there should not be an arbitrary threshold. Unfortunately, there are local authorities that are abusing the system and charging their ratepayers or charge payers more than is reasonable. It is right that the Government should take the necessary powers, which they will not be able to exercise until next ye[illegible] at the earliest.

The powers are especially relevant when we consider the position of some small authorities. I have no doubt that there are many local authorities that have special cases to bring to the Government's attention. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) was arguing a short time ago that the authority that has responsibility in his constituency is a special case. That, of course, can be considered. In general, however, the proposed powers should exist. I am sure that any authority with a special case will be able to take it up with the Government, and that my right hon. and hon. Friends will be entirely reasonable. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will have time to say something about that when he replies.

Those of us who think that the council tax will be a great improvement on what has preceded it, and those who believe, as I do, that the Government have defused a difficult situation by changing people's thinking about local government taxation, and therefore deserve our congratulations, should press on and ensure that the council tax will be ready by 1993. To do that, valuation must take place at the earliest possible date, and if that is to be done we must have the powers that are set out in the Bill. It would be wrong for the Opposition to seek to delay the Bill's progress, as they were saying a short time ago. It is essential that the Bill passes through the House at an early date. I hope that it will do so in the very near future, so that my constituents and the constituents of many hon. Members will face lower bills in future than in the past.

6.48 pm

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): In October 1987——

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There will be hon. Members contributing to the debate who have considerable personal wealth. Any benefit that they enjoy as a result of the Government's proposals will be merely a cherry on the top of the cake. Surely they should declare an interest when they speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House knows the rules about declarations of interest. Had the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) had any interest to declare, I am sure that he would have declared it.

Mr. Bellotti: In October 1987, the then Minister for Local Government, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who is now Secretary of State for Employment, said:

"Under the new system of the community charge, local authorities will become fully accountable to their electorates."

I wonder what happened to that possibility. I wonder also why we have been presented with draconian capping powers. The Minister added:

"Let me make it clear that we are only taking such powers because of the appalling record of a dozen or so authorities".

The capping powers that are before us will extend well beyond a "dozen or so" authorities, as we all know.

In 1988, the Minister said that the exemption limit of £15 million was being proposed because the community charge levied by authorities that spent less than £15 million accounted for only a fraction of the total community charge when the precept of other authorities is taken into account. If the Minister believed that then, what has changed tonight? He explained that, from his point of view, it was unnecessary in the context of protecting local charge payers for local authorities that spend more than £15 million to be brought into the ambit of charge limitation.

The capping powers before us are certainly draconian. If implemented, they will attack our public services at the grass roots. In introducing the Bill, the Secretary of State said that he wanted something that was appropriate to the system. Many hon. Members want local services appropriate to local needs and do not put the system before the needs of people. Most of our discussion should centre on the SSAs, and the House should conclude that, in the past, SSAs have been proved unfair and discredited. Local authorities of all political persuasions can be used as examples of that.

Of the local authorities that would have been caught in 1991-92 under the powers that are now being sought for the following year, 37 that are now exempt from capping plans were planning to spend more than 25 per cent. above their SSA. A further 42 planned to spend 20 per cent. above their SSA, and 55 planned to spend more than 12·5 per cent. above SSA, which is an important figure in the Government's current thinking about limiting the spending powers of local authorities. The Government will have either to cap an enormous number of local authorities, or to change the rules and introduce different details.

Liberal Democrats believe that those local authorities should be free to set their budgets, and should be accountable and answerable to their local electorates. There have recently been many local authority elections in which local people considered the manifestos of the political parties and made their judgment. They then elected councils of different political persuasions.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Would the hon. Gentleman care to tell us in which local authorities a political party produced a manifesto that was fully costed?

Mr. Bellotti: I visited Torbay—I do not know whether the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) is present, but I am not seeking to gain an advantage if he is not—where the manifesto had been costed, and I had the pleasure to launch that manifesto. I could give other examples. Political parties in local elections across the country do their best to cost the programmes that they put before the electorate. That is honourable, and credit should be given to them by members of all parties in the House.

The local elections resulted in the Conservative party's losing more than 900 seats. We should have confidence in the local electorate, and produce the programmes that they supported. By introducing capping powers, the Secretary of State is saying to those electors—some of whom voted Conservative, but most of whom voted for other parties—that they will stop people who have been properly elected from delivering the programmes that they promised. That is not only grossly unfair; it hits at the heart of democracy. That is why the Liberal Democrats are opposed in principle to capping.

Mr. Barry Field: Would the hon. Gentleman include in his comments the manifesto of the Liberal Democrats on

[Mr. Barry Field]

the Isle of Wight? The proprietor of the new ice rink protested to the leader of the Liberal Democratic party because it had told a deliberate lie. The leader declined to comment. The proprietor of the ice rink was rather upset, because he was a lifelong Liberal.

Mr. Bellotti: I have never been ice skating, so I am not well qualified to comment. However, I had the pleasure of visiting the hon. Gentleman's constituency a few months ago. I hope that that had some bearing on the fact that the Conservatives lost overall control of both the district councils on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Field: That is not true.

Mr. Bellotti: I believe it to be true.

Mr. Field: It is untrue.

Mr. Bellotti: That fact can easily be verified.

In amongst the flak that the Secretary of State is now getting because of the draconian measure of capping authorities that spend less than £15 million, I notice the flak of a furious Roy Thomason, the chairman of the Association of District Councils. He has not previously been against the Government's draconian measures, but on this occasion he is. What he said is relevant:

"We appear to have a Government that is being run by the Treasury for the sake of Treasury convenience".

If previously ardent Government supporters such as Roy Thomason issue such public press statements, the Secretary of State must take on board the feeling across the country these draconian measures.

My constituency includes part of the areas covered by Wealden district council. I am glad that the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith) mentioned the council earlier, and I want to add something to what he said. His point was well made, and what he said was true, but he could have gone on to say that, if the Secretary of State follows the line that he has followed in previous years in capping local authorities, and if that is applied to Wealden on current spending plans, it will lead next year to a cut in its budget of £400,000.

By no stretch of the imagination can a local authority such as Wealden district council be accused of being profligate, expensive or extravagent. It is a well managed, well run authority, which can often be encouraged to develop its programmes rather than cutting them. I do not know where Wealden will find £400,000 worth of cuts.

The chief executive of Wealden district council said that, unless the proposals were changed, there would be a "breakdown in the provision of local services".

That statement was supported by the leader of the council.

One of the reasons for such comments is the ridiculous situation of the SSAs leading our thinking. Wealden is a member of a family of similar local authorities. I sue the term "family" in the context of the Audit Commission's recognition that Wealden is in such a family of local authorties. In that family, SSAs vary from £88 to £173 per head of relevant population.

Surely the Government can see that the SSAs should not be the starting point for their consideration of local government spending.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bellotti: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman for the last time.

Mr. Field: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me a second time.

Surely the hon. Gentleman is not imputing a political overtone to this matter. He must be aware, as the local government spokesman of his party, that the Edwards committee in the 1960s recommended that there was a shortfall in rating revenue for the Isle of Wight. We created the document "Island Apart" to prove the increased cost of local government on the Isle of Wight. That is a regular feature of local government in the United Kingdom. Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that it has suddenly arisen under the present Government.

Mr. Bellotti: It has certainly worsened under this Government, because, since 1979, local government has lost £58 billion of central Government support. In 12 years of Conservative government, that loss of revenue has led to local authorities becoming less enchanted with the Government.

I want to make some progress now, because other hon. Members want to speak. I want to refer to one other local authority—my own, in Eastbourne. I mentioned that Wealden council might have to make £400,000-worth of cuts next year unless the Government changed the rules and gave way to representations.

The figure for Eastbourne borough council is almost £1 million. One could not regard Eastbourne council as extravagant or profligate. In addition to the delivery of local services, Eastbourne council needs to generate the local economy in areas such as tourism to bring wealth to the town.

If £1 million-worth of cuts in Eastbourne and £400,000-worth of cuts in Wealden would have to be made, we must call on the Government to listen to representations from across the country, and to think again about their proposals. The leader of the council in Eastbourne, Alan Shuttleworth, said that the proposals

"take no account of the needs of our communities and attack basic services, which local people depend upon."

I now ask the Government to consider a separate matter concerning Eastbourne. In addition to their current proposals, the Government are asking that the cost of short-term leases on houses be transferred from the housing revenue account to the general fund of local authorities. That will add another £250,000 to Eastbourne's expenditure, purely because of the way in which the costs are transferred. That must affect other local authorities as well. The Government must consider that specific point and whether there is any possibility of excluding that from the present arrangements.

When this Government first came to office, they began to attack local government, and local government has now lost £58 billion. We saw what happened to the Greater London council and to some of the metropolitan authorities. The Government then capped some of the larger spending authorities. Tonight, the Government want the House to approve the capping of smaller spending authorities. Where will it all end? Will it end with the parish councils and the local town councils? Will the Government attack local community groups on local councils? Will the Government stop local councils providing park seats, bus shelters and litter bins? Where will the draconian measures end?

When I consider the Government's attack on local authorities, I am reminded of the words of Pastor Niemöller: "First they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak out." Local government has been attacked, from the GLC down to the parish councils. People must stand up and dig in. If they do not, every local authority will be attacked by the Government—if it has not already been attacked.

The proposals in the Bill are ridiculous. I was asked earlier about costed manifestos. Well, the Bill refers to costing valuations; it says that the valuation of property will cost £250 million. There are 21 million properties in this country. How do the Government think that a property can be valued for £12? Many people would like to know that. The Government have not costed their proposals. They simply want to attack local authorities. Some hon. Members are prepared now to stand up and support local authorities.

Mr. Barry Field: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a tradition of this House that Front-Bench spokesmen take care not to mislead the House. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) is the local government spokesman for the Liberal Democrats. I distinctly heard him say that, as a result of the local elections, there was no overall control in the two borough councils on the Isle of Wight. That is quite incorrect in respect of Medina borough council, because it remains under Tory control despite the fact that it was one of the three borough councils, which included Salisbury council in the constituency of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), to be specifically targeted by the hon. Gentleman's party. I am sure that the hon. Member for Eastbourne did not intend to mislead the House, and that he will want to put that right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a point of dispute between two hon. Members; it is not a matter for the Chair.

7.3 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): This small but important Bill is a large step towards well managed local authority expenditure. The Bill is crucial, and the banding is a sane and sensible way to define a good and accurate measure of local personal input. The capping is crucial for fairness. It will protect local people from large expenditure by local authorities and protect the central taxpayer who now provides the largest proportion of locally expended money.

With the large rises in local authority expenditure, capping universally has become a necessity and a step towards the correct management that I will define. Local authority expenditure has increased by nearly 25 per cent. in only two years. We want to see whether we have received better value for money by a similar proportion. Have we received 25 per cent. better value for money from the central taxpayer and the local charge payer? I think not, and that must be why central charge capping is necessary. Lambeth council has not offered 25 per cent. better value for money in terms of local expenditure over the past two years.

We must also consider the quality of work carried out by local authorities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health earlier considered local child care institutions. She told us that expenditure on such institutions has increased by 60 per cent. over the past 11 years and the number of children in care has decreased by 40 per cent. over the same period, but, despite that enormous fresh sum of money and fewer children, the quality of work has clearly deteriorated.

The basic premise that local authority expenditure is created from the central taxpayer and the local taxpayer rests on redistribution to achieve acceptable standards throughout the country. However, that does not apply to education. There may be a first class sixth form in one school, but in a school in a different area where education has been over-politicised, generally speaking by Labour party councillors, the standards of education may be very much lower. The redistributive formula has not—alas—led to higher standards when local authorities have been left to get on with the job. Unrigorous thinking through over-politicisation has led to an unacceptable lowering of standards. Perhaps we should dub that "Bookbinderism". That kind of thinking allows public money to be spent lavishly to score political goals in respect of ordinary commodities such as school writing paper.

Local people now want to pay less central and local tax and they demand the best services. Clearly, when we consider the way in which Labour councils in particular have been behaving, those services are not being provided. That is why the restructuring of local government responsibilities must follow the charge-capping powers in the Bill and the methods of extracting funds both locally and centrally through banding. We must focus on cutting out waste, rewarding good management and restoring real accountability.

We must agree that there is a huge amount of dead wood in local authorities, particularly in Labour-controlled local authorities. In Labour local authorities, there seem to be whole forests where nothing moves and where there is such a stench of decay that it is clear that the living forest has decayed almost into a combustible fuel that is due to go up in smoke.

We all want local accountability, a fair charge and a reasonable way of ensuring that the local charge payer is not taken for a ride by the local councillors. It does not seem possible to achieve that under the local system, although I wish it was. The central charge-capping provision will protect the local charge payer and ensure that we take the next steps forward and work out the best possible mechanisms for redistributing local authority responsibilities and expenditure. By that method, I am confident that, by 1993, we will be able to present to the electorate a sane, sound and sensible system whereby that key 15 per cent. raised locally is spent wisely and well.

7.9 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I should like to speak about the Bill's relevance to the people whom I represent and hope to represent for a few more years.

My constituency is bedevilled by scandalously high unemployment. Increasingly, the communities that I

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represent are aging because, in response to that scandalously high unemployment, many young people in my part of Scotland are resorting to the traditional Scottish solution, which is emigration. At the weekend, I said goodbye to a young electrician and his wife who are heading for Australia. He is emigrating because he is sick of being out of work on the lower Clyde.

Many of my elderly constituents need the first-class services provided by the social work department of Strathclyde regional council. In Scotland, the Government party is in the minority and recent opinion polls show that the Conservatives have a 23 per cent. rating. It is likely that some Scottish Conservative Members will not be returned to the House at the next election.

The odd job lot at the Scottish Office are seeking to emasculate local government. Ian Bell, the well-known Scots journalist whose distaste for the Conservative party is equalled only by his dislike of Labour Members and councils—I have some cross-party support for that observation—wrote yesterday about the Secretary of State's decision to cripple Lothian region through its budget. In yesterday's *Observer Scotland*, that famous Scots journalist—some hon. Members might say infamous—said:

"What the Government is doing to Lothian Region is a national disgrace. It is victimisation of the crudest, most partisan sort, and Labour deserves the support of every Scot in its attempts to fight it. The trouble is, I'm not clear about what the party or its Lothian councillors propose to do about the Scottish Secretary's decision to cap the region's poll tax and force £18·5 million of budget cuts.

It's no piddling amount by anyone's standards. In Lothian it could mean the closure of schools, old people's homes and children's centres, an end to free bus travel for the aged, the closure of evening classes, a jobs freeze and cuts in road repairs. Compulsory redundancies cannot be ruled out."

Strathclyde regional council has to make a bleak, stark choice between making huge cuts in its budget or increasing its poll tax next year. The Secretary of State for Scotland has made his intentions as plain as possible. He said:

"this is a long-term step change in the central-local taxation relationship. If local authorities find themselves under tighter control in future because of accountability to the national taxpayer being more rigorous than accountability to local residents, they can reflect on the fact that they had their chance to be more responsible in their approach."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 872.]

Earlier in the debate, we heard that same distinction drawn between national taxpayers and local residents, as if the two were mutually exclusive. I remind the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) that local residents pay national income tax. It is absurd to distinguish between local residents and national taxpayers. The Secretary of State's intention is plain for all to see.

Mr. Dalyell: I am a Lothian Member, and I have never known a Scottish Secretary of State who was so vindictive towards a local authority. Does my hon. Friend think that such behaviour is honourable when, on every criterion, the Secretary of State's own authority of Dumfries and Galloway is spending more than Lothian region? The Secretary of State's behaviour towards his own authority in relation to what he has done to Lothian borders on the grossly dishonourable and even corrupt.

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend asks me to offer an observation on the conduct of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Despite the temptation, I cannot say that his conduct is dishonourable because you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would ask me to withdraw such an allegation. When one compares the two councils mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), it appears disreputable. Such discrepancies are not lost on the Scottish electorate. The Secretary of State and his colleagues will pay for them at the general election—when they call it.

The local authority seeks to provide all kinds of services for my constituents. It has a good integrated transport system. Because of the conduct of the Secretary of State and his predecessor, the regional council has already had to make cuts in those budgets that are designed to help vulnerable people. I shall give one example. Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 gives local social work departments a budget that can be used to help people who are facing severe problems, such as domestic violence.

Such a case was brought recently to my surgery. It involved a young woman who was desperately anxious to get away from her psychopathic husband. She was able to return to her home in Birmingham using the money given to her by a local social worker under section 12. The budget for such cases allocated to the district manager, Mr. Donald McQuade, of the social work department, Greenock, has been drastically cut and is nothing like what is used to be. That fine 1968 Act allows social work departments and those much maligned professionals, social workers, to assist people, but the budgets have been cut. That reflects badly on the Secretary of State.

I shall give another example of Strathclyde regional council being unable to provide decent welfare facilities for my vulnerable constituents. In the centre of Greenock, almost alongside the famous custom house in Custom House lane, the Fitzgerald training centre for those suffering from mental handicap takes in students or trainees, not only from my constituency but from the constituency of my hon. Friend the member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). It is bursting at the seams. The building is riven with damp and has inadequate facilities. My hon. Friend and I received a promise from Strathclyde regional council's social work department that a new centre would be built in Greenock, but we have now been informed that, because of cuts inflicted on its budget by the present Secretary of State, there is no chance of that desperately needed centre being built within the next three or four years—if the present odd job lot remain in power.

The home help service for my elderly constituents is also being cut back. There will be other cuts, because the Secretary of State has Strathclyde regional council fixed firmly in his sight—if not his own regional council.

As to clause 3, the banding range does not seem to be large enough. There should be about 14 or 15 bands, with a top banding for properties valued at £500,000 or more. There are few houses of that value in Scotland, but those who live in them should pay their full whack.

When the Minister replies, perhaps he will say a word or two about rights of appeal against valuations and what form the procedure will take. Will an individual have the right to take an appeal to the sheriff court or even to the Court of Session? Will there be a system of appeals tribunals? We have not yet been given answers to those important questions.

The Bill is a disgraceful measure, from a Government who seek to destroy local government in Scotland. There

is no principle behind it. The Bill has been devised because Scottish local government is overwhelmingly anti-Conservative party.

7.22 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I hope that I may reassure to some degree the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). This time last year, those of us in England and Wales were hearing bloodcurdling tales about the cuts in front-line services that local authorities would be required to impose and the mass redundancies that they would need to make. However, the National Association of Local Government Officers—which I am sure the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow accepts is not a Tory front organisation—found that councils such as Brent, Basildon and Lambeth made no cuts in front-line services and announced no redundancies. That is not to say that there will be none, but it is clearly the case that, when certain proposals are made, councils talk up their implications—but the reality is something much less worse.

I have frequently expressed in this Chamber my scepticism about capping. I have listened to the arguments for and against over the years, and have eventually become convinced, sadly, of the necessity of capping as a last resort. The need for it flows directly from the behaviour of a small number of authorities, but, unless capping remains available, the number of errant authorities will grow. If there is to be capping, it is difficult to argue against the logic of extending it to the majority of local authorities—including the district councils that are currently outside the system.

Presumably, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has gone through a similar intellectual exercise, and has worried about whether or not capping should exist. Our only problem is that he seems to have reached the conclusion that it should not exist, whereas he is on record—as my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) said—as confirming that Labour wanted to retain capping as a last resort. If Labour now thinks that capping should not exist, that is a very recent conversion. My guess is that, in the unlikely event of Labour finding itself in power, it would quickly need to devise ways of restraining a small number of local authorities.

I want to comment briefly on standard spending assessments. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti)—who, perhaps understandably, has temporarily left the Chamber—missed the point, because I remember him telling the House that the Government had substantially reduced the proportion of expenditure that is borne by central Government. That is true, but the logic of that statement is that, to the extent that a lower percentage of local authority expenditure is met by central Government, so, relatively speaking, is there less impact from the operation of SSAs. One cannot have it both ways. The hon. Member for Eastbourne rather overlooked that point.

I take the view that there is a continuing need for many refinements to SSAs. I say that on behalf not only of my own council of Havering but of many other authorities, including Doncaster, Barnsley, and Sheffield.

Mr. Holt: And Langbaurgh.

Mr. Squire: Langbaurgh, too, I am told by my hon. Friend. Certainly the other three that I mentioned are not Conservative-controlled authorities, but, like Havering, they have become convinced that the bases of the SSAs are invariably drawn against them. The reasons have been well ventilated in a number of debates, and I will not repeat them now. However, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister always to keep that aspect in mind. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House who have investigated it in detail are convinced that we have not yet found the best answer.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): I hope that my hon. Friend will accept my assurance that, in the latter part of every year, local authorities have an opportunity to discuss their SSAs with Ministers. That is done on a regular basis with a large number of local authorities. There is barely an SSA that is not at some point adjusted as a result of such representations—and of our discussions with local authority associations. We are very mindful of the concerns that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House express.

Mr. Squire: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He would expect me to say that we will be even more grateful when his comments are translated into perceived higher figures for all the local authority areas that currently feel themselves to be discriminated against.

The main part of the Bill prepares the ground for the new council tax. I welcome unreservedly the form that it will take, but will comment briefly on the details of its operation that have so far been made available. I recognise that it did not have to follow the introduction of the council tax, but I welcome the fact that those on income support, and one or two others, will no longer be required to pay. I can see why the House was convinced that they should pay, but enough evidence has shown the difficulties that local authorities and those on income support have experienced for us to realise that it is an improvement to take them out of the local tax system.

I welcome anything that does away with regular revaluations. Labour Members from north of the border should urge their colleagues from England and Wales to be slightly less fulsome in their support of the rating system, as they have more recent experience of rating revaluations. Like other hon. Members, I expect that the existing system of rebates will be transferred, so that the more generous system that we enjoy will continue.

The Government have proposed seven bands, whereby the largest property will pay two and a half times as much as the smallest. That seems right, because many people, especially elderly people, live in homes that they acquired many years ago, when their incomes were higher. I should hate them to be unreasonably penalised, as they would be by a system based only on valuation. Whether the system is based on seven, eight or nine bands is an important detail, but that is the right range.

Most important is the provision for relief for the single adult householder. Conservative Members need to reiterate that at every opportunity. Hon. Members who are allured to the old rating system and wish to return to it as soon as possible must explain to every single adult household in the country why should they suffer from the same burdens as they did under the old rating system, which were the main reason why the system was

[Mr. Squire]

discredited. I have no hesitation in commending the Government's recognition of the problem of the single adult householder.

What would be the alternative? What do those who oppose the Bill—we now understand that both opposition parties do so—put forward? We know what the Liberal Democrats want, but I shall not stretch your tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by going into detail on a local income tax. Suffice it to say that it would lead to many more problems in practice than its adherents believe in theory.

The Labour party does not believe in a local income tax, but wants a return to a rates system. Many in the parliamentary Labour party come from Scotland and will be aware of up-to-date rating values, but values in England and Wales date back to 1973 unless the house was constructed after that date. Therefore, the values for the majority of properties are ridiculously out of date. That would be bearable, perhaps, if that were the only problem, but rates carry the criticisms that I am reiterating and that many Labour Members have made over the years, and no doubt would privately still be making had it not become official Labour party policy.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am falling into personal temptation in intervening, but I am genuinely curious. The hon. Gentleman is making an impressive point about the out-of-date nature of the valuation base in England and Wales. Does he believe, therefore, that the new so-called council tax will require regular revaluations? What does he make of the promise made, I think, by the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, that once a property has been placed in a band it will remain there in perpetuity?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman makes two good points. The first and reasonably clear consequence of a banding system is that it would not need the same frequency of valuations as a system without bands. Once a house is in a band, it would be likely to stay within it, and the movement of values in the area would, broadly speaking, be in line. The hon. Gentleman's second point was whether it would, stay there in perpetuity, and the answer is that it would, subject to major improvements. The hon. Gentleman knows that the discussion document recommends that the valuation should be adjusted at the point of sale of the property. That also makes much sense and avoids many valuation changes that would make relatively little difference.

As far as I understand it, the Labour party proposes four different values in an uneasy alliance, involving replacement and rental values that, by implication, would be reviewed annually. I urge Labour Members who understand these things to look carefully at what they are pledged to. I do not expect them to agree with the Government's proposals—that would be asking too much—but they have wide experience and they know that, if the Labour party's proposals are remotely as I have suggested, they do not make sense. In their own interests, let alone the interests of better discussion of local government finance, they should do a bit more homework.

I believe that the Bill is a simple Bill that is justified. It will herald a good and better system for local government taxation and I give it my full support.

7.37 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I rise to speak with some weariness. The Government have meddled with local government finance and must hold the record for the number of Bills introduced to adjust or change local government legislation. I note with interest that there has been little enthusiasm for the Bill among Conservative Members. It seems, having listened carefully to the Secretary of State, that the Government are in a hole and are digging themselves deeper into it because they know of no way out. We do—a general election—but the Government are frightened of that.

I intend to be parochial. I usually hope not to be so, but I wish to speak specifically about clause 1 and the problems that it will cause district councils such as Derwentside and other small district councils, which have suffered from enormous industrial devastation in the past 20 years and are trying to deal with the consequences.

It was interesting that the Tory leader of the Association of District Councils gave the Bill a warm welcome. His press release says:

"A furious Roy Thomason, ADC Chairman, declared: 'We appear to have a Government that is being run by the Treasury for the sake of the Treasury convenience.

I am shocked that the Government should be threatening small-spending district councils with these centralist controls. The budgets involved are trivial sums in terms of overall public expenditure.'"

Those sums may be trivial in terms of overall public expenditure, but they are critical to the survival of areas such as Derwentside and to the way in which they can deal with the economic devastation of the past decade.

Other districts in Derwentside are also vulnerable because of the ludicrous standard spending assessments. The SSAs are inapplicable to small district councils which have particular problems, and they do not match needs.

Mr. Holt: While specifically criticising the SSAs, will the hon. Lady home in on the aspect in Durham and Langbaurgh with which she particularly disagrees? Is her reason based on the fact that that area does not get large sums under SSA, like Langbaurgh, because they do not have a large immigrant population? If so, does the hon. Lady wish to have a large immigrant population in Derwentside to get more SSA?

Ms. Armstrong: That intervention is somewhat bizarre. I am arguing that SSAs should be related to an area's needs.

Mr. Holt: They are.

Ms. Armstrong: I am sorry, but they are not. When regional policy was actively pursued in the north, much money was spent on infrastructure—for example, on making sure that our housing was adequate. That made us ineligible because of the way in which SSA is calculated. I shall not pursue the discreditable views of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). I wish to talk about the needs of my constituents.

Before last month's elections in Derwentside, the Conservatives held three seats—they now hold only two.

Mr. Holt: How many do the Liberals have?

Ms. Armstrong: The electorate have had their opportunity to give their verdict on the Government's legislation and actions. They made that clear in Derwentside.

Mr. Holt: What about the Liberals?

Ms. Armstrong: The district council is overwhelmingly Labour, gaining an overwhelming vote of confidence from the electorate at the elections.

Mr. Holt: How is Derwentside doing under Labour?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) must not persist in heckling from a sedentary position. I hope that he will desist.

Ms. Armstrong: Derwentside district council——

Mr. Holt: Now will the hon. Lady answer?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much hope that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh will not disregard my advice.

Ms. Armstrong: Consett is located in the Derwentside district. In 1980, the economy of Consett and the surrounding area depended on the steel industry and related industrial activity. Because of the nature of the area and the town's location, the problems facing the district during the past decade are, thankfully, unique. Over the past few years since the last general election, Ministers and Conservative Members have lectured me about the economic miracle in Consett and told me that I should be grateful for the increased activity and should not run down my area when pointing to its needs.

None of the regeneration would have been possible had it not been for the determination of Derwentside district council, which went into partnership with the public sector, the voluntary sector and whoever was prepared to invest or to work in the area—it was prepared to do whatever was necessary and possible to attract industry and support. It cost the electors of Derwentside money, but they took, and take, the view that, if they had not been prepared to contribute, their area would die. Because of their determination to have a future for themselves, their families and their community, they were determined to contribute to attract support from the European Community, central Government, regional agencies and the private sector. Derwentside industrial development agency is a model for many other parts of the country of the way in which public and private sectors can work well together. It cost money, but it has not solved all the problems.

Over the past year, measured unemployment in Derwentside has risen by 16 per cent. and 3,925 people are unemployed. The unemployment figures in Henley, the Secretary of State's constituency, are slightly different. Unemployment rose by 150 per cent. during the past year, but the number of people unemployed in his constituency is one third the number of Derwentside. The base in Derwentside is a much bigger problem to overcome.

Serious problems still exist in Derwentside. The council decided that it had a responsibility to fight for economic regeneration, so it spent to ensure a future for the area, even though regional support through the regional development agency has declined significantly over the past decade. Now the council is told that, by making that commitment, it is going against the Government's views of what an authority of its size should spend. The Government have no idea of the problems that the area faces. A council has a responsibility in those circumstances to meet the needs of its population and to work with it to secure a future. An enormous amount of work must still be done.

If the Government succeed with the Bill, they will be saying to the people of Derwentside, "We do not see you as having any future. We are not prepared to support you in creating a future and opportunities for the people you serve." I cannot support such a Bill or such vindictive action, and I hope that Conservative Members will think again.

7.49 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I suspect that it will be a good few years before we hear the last word on the community charge, but even at this stage one can make two points which will probably command some support from Conservative and Opposition Members. First, the community charge was not perceived as fair; secondly, whatever the right amount should be, it was clearly costing too much.

On the question of fairness, there is no way in an imperfect world that there will ever be agreement across the board about what is a fair basis for local government taxation. Having said that, it has become clear to me from the many people to whom I have spoken in my constituency that even though some have misgivings about the council tax, it is seen on the whole as being fairer. In an imperfect world, that is probably the most that we could expect.

The amount is crucial because I suspect that if we had got the amount right in advance, people would not have picked away at the concept of the charge to decide whether it was fair. We did not get the amount right and the amount was too high. It is one thing to ask how much the amount should be and one can bandy figures around. It may be difficult to define what a fair amount is but, in the end, one can see what is fair. It has seemed to me for a long time that the way to arrive at the appropriate amount for a local government tax is to shift some expenditure back to central Government. It seemed clear to me that, in these days, 25 per cent. is probably too large a proportion of expenditure to expect a local authority to raise. It is now 14 per cent. as a result of the measures taken in the Budget by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, which seems about right.

Even if we now have a structure which is fair, and even if we now have a mechanism to ensure that the amount is seen to be fair, that can only work provided that one absolutely crucial point is made—we must ensure that the amount that a local authority can raise in local taxation is to some extent controlled.

One of the miseries from the community charge debate and one of the things that may yet make it worthwhile is to try to learn what harsh experiences sometimes teach us. I have seen the operation of the community charge from inside and outside Government, and it seems that the critical aspect is to recognise that no control mechanism will work except capping. The theory was great. The theory was that, in some way, the system would police itself; that, if a local authority levied at too high a level, the electorate would in the end deal with that and there would be a self-correcting mechanism. It is a tremendous theory, which makes perfect sense, provided that it is only talk. In

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

reality, it did not work. Any responsible way of approaching the problem must acknowledge that simple fact.

There are probably three principal reasons why we did not succeed in producing a situation in which the electorate would pass their own judgment on the level of the community charge in a particular area. First, in many parts of the country it is unrealistic to think that there would be a meaningful change in the complexion of local party government. Some areas are strongly Conservative, whereas others are strongly Labour. In my experience, it is unrealistic in such areas to think that there will be such a sea change in attitude that the community charge, or the local government tax, can be controlled.

Secondly, if it is correct to say that the electorate will pass judgment, they can do so only after the charge has been introduced. The electorate are never able to pass judgment beforehand or at the time. Therefore, even if there is some electoral retribution around the corner, it does not happen soon enough. In the meantime, a locality may have imposed on it a community charge which is unjustifiable. A considerable time might elapse before the electorate can do anything practical about it. Once again, the system breaks down.

Perhaps the most important reason why leaving the decision to the electorate does not work is that, faced with the responsibility of saying that their local authority is at fault, the good old British electorate will instead blame the Government. It has been an interesting experience to receive correspondence from people who readily admit that they understand that their local authority is responsible for setting the level of the charge, but who nevertheless decide that the Government are to blame.

What happened in my district council is an interesting example. It is an issue with which I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will deal. I do not think that hon. Members are especially aware of the circumstances in my district council. The charge that it set was certainly larger than I should have liked, but it paled into insignificance when compared with what happened in many Labour-controlled areas. It was interesting to see how the debate took place locally. There was an expectation that the local council would set a community charge in line with the SSA. The debate was heated, and there was an initial vote. It seemed as though a proposition had been carried and as if a charge would be introduced at a certain level. There was then a recorded vote on a narrow majority.

Suddenly, the electors of Teignbridge were faced with a community charge which, although nothing like as great as would have been imposed in a Labour area, was being imposed in an area with no overall Conservative control where people noticed that it had been set at a far higher level than the Government would have wanted. When people wrote to me about that, they acknowledged that the Government were not directly at fault because the local council had set the charge, but they asked, "Why on earth did the Government not see it coming? Surely all your experience of local government was such that you must have realised that, given a free hand, some local authorities will spend."

Authorities may spend from the best of motives, but if we want to see an ultimate discipline imposed on local authorities, we cannot leave it to the electoral mechanism because that will not work, and we have seen that in practice. People said to me that it might not be the Government's fault on this occasion, but capping powers exist. They argued many times that such powers are used only in the grossest of cases and should be applied more widely.

One of the things that I hope to find out, now that the £15 million exemption has been removed, is at what level the Government are prepared to tell a local authority that they have confidence in the SSAs, that they will negotiate with the local authority but, if the local authority goes beyond a certain level, what degree of excess the Government are prepared to sanction.

The starting point must be that we have confidence in the SSA mechanism. I was once on the inside and had responsibility on a day-to-day basis for the calculation for that formula. It was possible to see that it was fair and uniform and that, in the process of negotiation, it could be made to fit as best as could be in a particular area. If the Government believe that the SSA is an appropriate level, it seems strange that the charge will have to be very much in excess of it before the Government step in. I am aware of people who have been in local government—as I have—who say that that is ridiculous and that the Government are detracting from the right of people to elect their own representatives and that they should have the final say.

I am in favour of people having the final say. I am in favour of democracy. But let us make no mistake—local government is the creation of the House of Commons, which must take the ultimate responsibility for revenue raising in this kingdom and, at the end of the day, the people will decide that, if they do not like the Government of the day, they will put that Government out of office. That is the way it should be, and I have no complaint about that system.

For a local authority to pretend that it can set up an alternative sovereignty and say that its judgment, and not that of the House, must prevail is an extraordinary proposition. Too often, we mouth such sentiments as, "It must be a matter for the local authority—we mustn't interfere." Sometimes we must get back to first principles and the first principle in this issue is that the House of Commons must make the ultimate judgment, and bluntly, the House and the party of Government will be put out if the electorate disagree with the choices that they make.

We are debating Government policy and it is right that we should. However, when people assess the worth of the Bill and examine the provisions in it, they will want to know something about the alternatives. I found it fascinating—I say that with all the insincerity at my command—to see the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) thinking desperately on his feet trying to work out how to explain that, in extremis, there must always be a reserve power to cap. His explanation was that it was something to do with fraud. We all know that, with matters of fraud, one does not have to a reserve power to cap. We all know that fraud can be dealt with in any event.

The hon. Member for Dagenham apparently forgot what his earlier explanation was. At one time, it was not fraud. He said:

> "It's really just a hypothetical question to ask us to define what would be extreme circumstances. What I am saying to you—I am not ducking your question in any sense—I am saying in extremis that reserve power would have to be reserved, but it's impossible to say in advance what those circumstances would be".

There we have it from the hon. Member for Dagenham. There will be the terrors of the earth, but he is not certain what they are.

We heard this evening a wriggling, squirming and giggling assurance, which came through in the end, that a Labour Government would not cap. On 15 February 1991, the hon. Member for Dagenham was asked what he would do about a 60 per cent. rise. He said:

"Well I don't see, even then, that we would want to come in . . . and cap".

That was his attitude. In a sense, one would expect nothing less from the Labour party; one could say that, in the end, the hon. Member for Dagenham came clean under some pressure and admitted that that was his attitude.

What I found extraordinary was to hear the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) in no way try to dissociate himself from that proposition. He was eager, anxious and positively bouncing to associate himself with the Labour party.

Mr. Bellotti *indicated assent.*

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Member for Eastbourne is nodding his assent now. He has made it clear that he too would see no restrictions imposed——

Mr. Bellotti *indicated assent.*

Mr. Nicholls: I am glad to mention the hon. Gentleman's sedentary assent, so that it can be recorded in *Hansard*. The hon. Gentleman made it clear, and continues to do so, that he can see no circumstances for capping.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne mentioned a passing acquaintance with local government in the west country. I remind him that we too can remember the experience of Liberal affairs in local government in Devon. We can remember a time only about five years ago when a Liberal administration was kept in power in county hall by the Labour party. The price that the Liberals were prepared to pay was to agree to abolish Devon's last grammar school. The reality of Liberal Democrats in local government is that they will always jump into bed with the Labour party in the end. It says much for the Labour party that, in the end, even it found the association with the Liberals so disgraceful that it felt the need to withdraw.

In the end, the House of Commons must act as the ultimate protector against the exploitation of the people. Without proper capping powers, that exploitation will continue. The experience of the community charge has been bad and painful enough. It would be unthinkable for us not to be prepared to learn from our mistakes. The pity of it is that the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats have shown tonight that they are quite incapable of learning from a mistake. Mercifully, that charge cannot be laid against the Conservative party.

8.2 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I want briefly to follow the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) in his constitutional analysis of the protectors of the people. In a few months—we do not know how long it will be—we shall go to the country in an election. I very much doubt whether any hon. Member will say blandly to the electorate that the real protection of the rights of the people is the House of Commons. Candidates will be pleading for votes, and there will be little discussion, especially in Scotland, about the legislative sovereignty of the United Kingdom Parliament. There will be a great deal of speech-making about the sovereignty of the Scottish people. That shows clearly to me one of the major failures of the House of Commons, which was revealed in the nature and thrust of the speech by the hon. Member for Teignbridge.

The only part of the United Kingdom that had the poll tax in front of it, in legislative terms, was Scotland in 1987. The people of Scotland overwhelmingly rejected the poll tax, but the Government and the House of Commons in particular paid little or no attention to them. The Bill is a panic measure in a retreat from what could have been foretold—the tenacity of the people of Scotland. It is the result of ignoring the views of the people of Scotland, and of the massive campaign of righteous civil disobedience and non-payment in Scotland.

We have moved a considerable way. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is not in his place. I understand his reasons and I am not referring to him pejoratively. He referred to an article on Sunday by a Scottish journalist, Mr. Ian Bell. The hon. Member quoted a remark by Mr. Ian Bell which showed that, on this occasion, he was speaking in terms that were not unfavourable to the Labour party. Mr. Ian Bell concluded by saying that "Labour opposes and Lang disposes".

What does Labour do when the Secretary of State uses powers that have been called "corrupt" by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)? Does Labour say, "Lie down and obey the law," or does it show some tenacity in its opposition? Perhaps the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will give us some idea of Labour's intentions when the capping powers are used, as they are being used in a sense by the Secretary of State at present.

In a point of order, I made an allusion to the nature of the Bill. It is a tawdry Bill. In view of the lack of Scottish legislation going through the House at present, there should have been a unique and specific Scottish Bill to deal with the matter expeditiously in relation to the position that prevails in Scotland. One way or another, we would have been given the opportunity of doing what is amply justified in terms of fairness. We could have abolished the poll tax in legislative form; it has already been abolished in practical terms because of the attitude of the Scottish people. We would have had the opportunity to abolish the poll tax not in 1993—if the Government persist in office—but in 1992.

There are two ways in which the poll tax could be abolished. The first way is not entirely favourable to me, but might suit the hon. Member for Garscadden. We could introduce a Bill to reintroduce the rating system. I understand that that is the short-term Labour party measure, and it could be done.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Long-term.

Mr. Douglas: I may have it wrong, but I understand that it would be a short-term measure and that Labour has longer-term proposals, with which I do not want to deal tonight. The idea is that the Government of the day would reintroduce the rating system. In Scotland, the basis for rating is not too outmoded because of the recent revaluation, which caused us all the difficulties in 1985. It might be uprated without too much difficulty in terms of inflation.

[Mr. Douglas]

I argue far more strongly that, given the time scale between now and April 1992, we could introduce a local income tax for Scotland without great difficulty. I do not argue the same case for Britain or for the United Kingdom as a whole, but I suggest that, in Scotland, the mechanism is there and that we could do that.

What have we gone through all the paraphernalia to do? We are considering the collection of about £800 million by means of a massive process of banding, valuation, revaluation, assessment and appeals, which would run in harmony with the poll tax registration. It is completely unnecessary. Why do I think that it is unnecessary? I shall repeat comments that I have made before, because they do not seem to be getting through to the electorate. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Garscadden sniggers. Does he or anyone else in the House know any people who pay their rates or poll tax out of anything other than income? I do not know anyone who sells his paintings or other capital assets in order to make his contribution to local revenue. Everyone I know pays out of his income.

A tax related to income should be an income tax. We hear strictures from the Opposition about the change in the balance of taxation. They say that the Government have altered the balance from direct to indirect taxation. Might I ask the hon. Member for Garscadden whether it is the intention of the Labour party to go back on that? Would a Labour Government reverse the increase in VAT and return to a rate of 15 per cent? Those are important considerations for the electorate.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does not the hon. Gentleman want an answer?

Mr. Douglas: I do not expect an answer, but the points that I make are important and must be put on the record.

We have seen an alteration in the gearing of local government funding. In Scotland, only £1 out of £10 of local authority revenue comes from what will be called the community tax or council tax. There may have been an argument in the past for using fairly draconian powers to cap local authorities because a substantial amount—up to 25 per cent.—of local expenditure was raised locally. Where is the thrust of that argument now in relation to gearing? The Government have no confidence whatever in the local economy or local accountability. A local income tax would create local accountability. It is possible to go either way. Other countries raise a much higher proportion of their revenue from local income tax than the United Kingdom.

I was heartened today by the decision of Grampian regional council, which is Labour-controlled, to support a local income tax. The vote was 23 Liberal and Scottish National party members for and eight Tories against, while Labour members, who could not make up their minds, abstained.

There is a further point in favour of a local income tax in Scotland. We could dispute the figures. We asked the Secretary of State to supply his own figures. He did so, but we dispute them. I wish to put it on the record for the Scottish National party that the necessary £800 million or so could be raised by a Scottish income tax of about 3·5p or 4p in the pound.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister disagrees, but that is a matter for discussion and analysis by both hon. Members and experts. I am willing to have such discussions with the Minister.

To substantiate my support for a local income tax, I quote from the report of the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Although the institute argued initially for a property-based tax, the report says:

"In the longer term, however, if it is intended that local taxes should contribute more to the costs of local government, we see no alternative to the eventual introduction of a local income tax, either as a supplement to, or replacing, property taxation".

That is a considered view.

I argue forcibly for a local income tax in Scotland by 1992. It would be possible to introduce it if there was the will to do so. The only objection comes not from Scotland but from the United Kingdom Treasury. That objection would persist whether a Conservative or Labour Government were in power. If we are to return to fundamental autonomy and accountability, local authorities must have a flexible and buoyant source of finance. The only one that would work is a local income tax.

In his speech, the Secretary of State did not deal with some detailed points. I am aware that some of the points that I intend to raise may be Committee points, but I fancy that we shall have a truncated Committee stage. Therefore, with your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I shall ask the Under-Secretary to explain several points.

Clause 2(2)(a) refers to

"an excessive increase in those expenses over the total estimated expenses there mentioned of the local authority in respect of the financial year".

What legal backing do the Government have for that definition? What does it mean in legal terms? Who will determine what is excessive? That is a fair point.

An open-ended suggestion is made in the proposed section 3A in clause 2(2)(b). It says:

"Different principles may be determined under sub-paragraph (3) above for different classes of local authority and the Secretary of State may classify local authorities for the purposes of this sub-paragraph by reference to such factors as he thinks fit."

What does that mean? What criteria will be used when the Secretary of State forms a view of what he thinks fit?

Clause 3(9) says:

"The Secretary of State may be order amend, or substitute another definition for, any definition of domestic property for the time being effective in relation to Scotland."

What is the nature of the power that the Government seek? It is an open-ended power. The Secretary of State could make up his mind and impose on us any definition of domestic property that he thought fit.

We are told that clause 4 applies to England and Wales only. Clause 4(6) contains significant definitions of the charging authority, the community charges registration officer and the valuation officer. None of them applies to Scotland. The Bill contains no definition of a valuation officer in Scotland. The Secretary of State said that the Commissioners of Inland Revenue would be the top dogs. This is a new procedure, under which the local assessors in Scotland would not be asked to work in harmony with the Commissioners of Inland Revenue. I am open to being convinced otherwise by the Minister, but as I read it, the local assessor will be subordinate to the Commissioners of Inland Revenue. As far as I am aware, that is something new.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes several perfectly proper and constructive points. The Commissioners of Inland Revenue will ensure consistency of approach north and south of the border. The responsibility for carrying out valuations will lie with the assessors.

Mr. Douglas: I am sorry to pursue the matter, but that is not what the definition of a valuation officer says. I refer the Minister to clause 4(6), which says:

"'valuation officer' means any officer of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue who is for the time being appointed by them to be a valuation officer or a deputy valuation officer for the purposes of the valuation under section 3 above."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will have an opportunity to clarify that when he winds up, which I would welcome.

My major objection is to the regulations that could be made under the Bill, which is an important one for local democracy. It is a departure from the procedures that have existed hitherto. It will be an enabling Bill, but the Government have the audacity to provide in clause 7(3)(a) that the power to make orders will be done under the negative procedure for statutory instruments.

It surprised me that the hon. Member for Garscadden made no real attempt to state what the Labour party would do if and when it entered office to overcome the massive difficulties that local authorities are encountering in ending the poll tax.

In the interim, the Government have a responsibility to abolish the poll tax a year earlier in Scotland. I have suggested some ways in which they could do that, and they have a major responsibility to consider the collapse of local authority finance in Scotland. The Government cannot wash that away and say that it is a result of massive campaigns of non-payment. The situation has been imposed by the Government, and anyone with credibility in the Government has a responsibility to consider what is happening in Strathclyde, Lothian and other regions of Scotland. The Government will rue the day if they do not take action immediately.

8.21 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I rise to support the changes in the Bill as I think they are very welcome indeed.

May I take the House back to the question of capping powers that are included in the first part of the Bill? My main local authority is Derbyshire county council, led by the estimable Mr. Bookbinder, who is rapidly becoming known throughout the country, as we have known him for some time in Derbyshire, as the epitome of irresponsible local government. It is a Labour-controlled authority and it was capped last year. Its budget was reduced from £560 million to £520 million which, given the size of Derbyshire and the fact that on the whole we have relatively few problems, is one hell of a lot of money to be spending and to be lifting from local people.

This year, Derbyshire has not been capped and that gives point straight away to the suggestion that the existence of effective capping powers has a substantial effect on the councils concerned. The very fact that the powers exist means that often they do not have to be used. Fewer councils are being capped this year than were being capped last year, and some of the councils that were capped last year, such as Derbyshire, have decided to behave themselves, with the consequence that they are being much more sensible. As a result, in Derbyshire, the budget is up 7 per cent.—just a smidgeon under 7 per cent. —from last year to around £556 million. That is exactly the amount to the whisker that the county council could increase its budget to under the stated capping rules set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment last autumn without being capped this year.

I would suggest that Labour-controlled county councils such as Derbyshire are very cute indeed about the capping procedure. They know exactly what the rules are, they are smart enough to work it all out, and they are being entirely and thoroughly cynical about the way in which they operate the rules. Let me illustrate one result of their cynicism.

Last year, Derbyshire county council was capped but, hey presto, there were no redundancies. This year, the county is not capped and has seen a 7 per cent. rise in its budget. Suddenly, 400 teaching jobs are to go, other redundancies have been announced, music lessons have been cut, swimming lessons were stopped in March, libraries all over the county have been closed and museum pieces have been sold to raise money, which has resulted in the authority being thrown out of the Museums Association and thus losing grants. In other words, everything has gone completely berserk up there, and my constituents are extremely worried.

What puzzles me about this is that, if there has been an increase of 7 per cent. of spending in Derbyshire—a 7 per cent. increase is not a cut—why do we need any redundancies at all? What on earth does the county think it is playing at? Other councils have been capped and made similar judgments, and if they can manage, why cannot Derbyshire manage as well?

If one takes the trouble to read *Public Service*, the newspaper of the National and Local Government Officers Association—NALGO—one sees that Basildon has made it clear that it can be capped without cuts and redundancies and that Bristol and Lambeth have also made that clear. That leaves open the question: why do we need redundancies in Derbyshire at all?

The answer is that we do not need redundancies in Derbyshire. They have occurred in the most cynical way possible. It would have been very easy for the council to keep within its budget in the way that other councils have kept within theirs since councils were created, by, for example, marginally increasing some charges. The council has failed to increase, and has made a virtue of its policy of refusing to increase, the charge for school meals for 10 years. Therefore, much of the spending has gone on an increased subsidy for school meals. That subsidy is not to free school meals which are covered by statutory policy, but to others. Children in my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) arrive at school in big cars and yet have their food subsidised because the council believes that without the subsidy they would not eat. What absolute, impossible, irresponsible nonsense. That is where much of the increased spending in Derbyshire is going.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What has that to do with the Bill, which is about poll tax capping for authorities with budgets under a certain size and relates to, for example, South Derbyshire district council? Does the hon. Lady feel that South Derbyshire needs such a Bill?

Mrs. Currie: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been listening. Perhaps if he listened a bit more he would learn a bit more. If he more willingly paid his own community charge and gave a lead to the whole of Derbyshire to do that instead of pretending that people on salaries of the kind that we pick up here should not have to pay anything, I should listen to him more carefully. I shall do him the courtesy of listening to him again.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Lady is behind the times, because my community charge has been paid. I was not going to leap to the position in which it would cross into another financial year.

The hon. Lady's circumstances are such that she gained considerably from the operation of the poll tax and now wants further legislation that would benefit her still further. She has benefited from the £140 reduction, she benefited from the original legislation, and now she seeks to benefit from this Bill. If the hon. Lady wants to talk about individuals, she should talk about herself.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman did not pay a bean until he was threatened with a summons. He and his colleagues in the north of the county had to be threatened with being taken to court by his own Labour-controlled council a year after he received his community charge bill, like all the rest of us. He has a long way to go before he has any credibility. In response to his point, let me say that I am interested in protecting all my constituents, from the very poorest upwards. I am trying to do my best to protect the hon. Gentleman's constituents as well.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend touches a point when she speaks about trying to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. She has spoken of the cuts and redundancies that Derbyshire introduced for purely party political purposes and for the publicity it wanted to achieve. Does my hon. Friend accept that much the same happened in Nottinghamshire? It was not capped and had a substantial increase in its budget, but to make a political song and dance, the council wanted to close 12 old people's homes. Happily, it was its own supporters that forced it off that political nightmare.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend, who is also my neighbour, is absolutely right. In my home county, school meals alone are now subsidised to the tune—an admitted tune—of over £13 million, while cuts are being sought to the tune of £16 million. Derbyshire needs no cuts, and it would be easy for the county to balance its books. The cause of the problems in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and other such councils is not the Government's action on capping but cruel, stupid and short-sighted administration at county headquarters. I am convinced that, before the end of this financial year, members of Derbyshire county council will be disqualified from public office—and good riddance, too.

This debate not only concerns Derbyshire but is of national significance—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members have spoken about their constituencies and would criticise me if I did not speak about mine. I am delighted and honoured to have the opportunity to do so in the House, and shall continue to do so after the next election—so they can put that in their pipes and smoke it.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Did the hon. Lady vote for the poll tax Bill? If so, did she do so for one of the good reasons that was put forward by the Conservative party—because it would make local government accountable? Accountability means giving local councillors the right to take decisions and to pay the price through the ballot box. Why is the hon. Lady now so much in favour of removing that accountability?

Mrs. Currie: I shall follow the hon. Gentleman down the route that he suggests. I voted for the community charge legislation, and have always voted for accountability in local government. I spent 11 years in local government and developed a considerable knack at spending enormous amounts of public money and explaining myself afterwards to the electorate. The hon. Gentleman is really saying that the Labour party has a devil-may-care approach to running the economy, which is of far greater concern than the accountability of local councils.

I understand that the Labour party is, more or less, against capping, although some Labour Members talk of reserve powers. Indeed, Opposition Members from Derbyshire have been amongst the strongest advocates of doing away with capping and say that they would rely on the ballot box. That was the approach that we took and it does not work. I wish to heaven that it did. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has only to look through today's vote and the blue pages of more than 800 motions signed by hundreds of hon. Members to see how often we would vote for more money to be spent and how seldom we would vote, in this House, this country or this world, for taxes to be raised to match that spending. That is the problem

Over and over again in local government, in my constituency, in the wards that I represented in the city of Birmingham and the wards and constituencies of Opposition Members, we find that, given the chance, people vote to spend more money and to defer the tax or have it sloughed off on to somebody else. That is human nature and is, ultimately, why this Bill has been introduced.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to develop this point a little further in the light of the comments of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti), who was, I believe, speaking on behalf of the Liberal Democrat party. He said that, over the past few years, local authorities should have had another £58,000 million. That figure was based on spending during a period when there had been spending limits and capping on those local authorities. I do not know whether the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party would impose limits or whether that £58,000 million would then become £68,000 million or £100,000 million. Where on earth do they believe that that money will be found? It is the biggest con that I have ever heard.

Mrs. Currie: May I suggest to my hon. Friend that the money would come from the same place as it has always come from when Labour Governments have been in office and when Labour Governments have been backed up by Liberals because they have not had a majority in the House. It would come from the printing press. It is the easiest thing in the world to print or borrow money, and to see inflation rise and then wonder why it has risen. The net result of all those promises would be an increase in taxes, borrowing and inflation—there would be no choice —because that is the inevitable result of the promises and policies that Opposition Members offer.

The appalling speeches that we have heard from the Opposition tonight show that the Labour party is not ready or fit to govern——

Mr. Maxton: We are going to govern.

Mrs. Currie: No, they are not going to govern. That is what the hon. Gentleman said before the last election and the election before that, and look what happened. Indeed, that is what they said before the 1979 election. The electorate knows that the Labour party is incapable of running the economy because it makes promises that it cannot, could not and should not keep. There is no such thing as Labour probity or prudence on public spending. The fact that it is against the Bill proves that.

The Labour party would replace the Audit Commission with a quality commission, which appears to be designed so that more money can be spent instead of being kept under control. It would abolish compulsory competitive tendering which, by any measure, has produced major savings and improvements in quality in local government. The Opposition would have regional assemblies so that, on top of Derbyshire county council, we would have a regional assembly in the east midlands. My hon. Friends and I would have to cope not only with parish councils, district councils and county councils but also with a regional assembly. I presume that that, too, would be financed out of thin air. I remember when we got rid of west midlands county council, which we brought in, and how no one noticed that it had gone because it did nothing of value. Heaven help us.

It is apparent that the Labour party has no policy to control local government spending. It is simply against ours and against every sensible effort that we make in Bills such as this. Their approach is neither subtle or intelligent nor plausible. Capping is absolutely necessary in the national interest. It is part of the long hard struggle to reduce inflation and to keep it down. Clearly there should be no exemptions, and that is why the Bill is necessary.

The greatest pity of all is that we did not take such a measure when we introduced the community charge in 1990.

Mr. Maxton: In 1989.

Mrs. Currie: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, as he is right about that.

We should have taken powers in 1989 to cap every local authority in the country, knowing that it would probably not be necessary once those powers existed. If we had done so, I am sure that the introduction of the community charge would have been much less traumatic. Councils would not have been able to increase spending and load it on to the community charge. We may have been able to keep our promise of a community charge of about £250, which is the present average, and it is possible that we would not have needed to seek a third system of local government finance in as many years. However, I am convinced that the third system will be better than the previous two. If I say it often enough, I may convince my electors, too.

I hear the bone-crunching sounds of a Government who have learnt their lesson. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that they do not intend to be caught again. However, in the background I hear the snorting noises of a Labour party that has not learnt its lesson about inflation, and never will. On that basis, I am more than happy to support the Bill.

8.39 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): During this lengthy debate, I have been making a careful note of the issues that Conservative Members seem to feel have some substance. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said that it was necessary to cap councils as part of the Government's macro-economic control of the economy, but at the start of the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) asked the Secretary of State to explain how councils making local decisions would affect the country's economy in a macro-economic sense, to which he received absolutely no answer. The answer has never been given. Conservative Members keep asserting that that is so, but never give evidence to prove it. There is quite a weight of academic evidence to show that the idea is nonsense.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) gave three reasons why councils had to have their poll taxes capped. His first curious reason was that a council can go on and on, never change hands and remain in the power of one party. Most distressing to him was the idea that a council could remain in the hands of the Labour party for years and years. It does not seem to have occurred to the hon. Gentleman that that is so because the local electorate want it and, if and when the day comes that they are dissatisfied with the council, it will be removed from office. That is why there are elections on a fixed term of every four years. Incidentally, that is a fairer system than the one in Parliament, where the Prime Minister holds the starting gun and can decide to hold an election when he or she feels that the time is appropriate.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge also said that the local electorate could not respond to decisions that they did not like because the time span involved meant that they had to respond too long after the decisions were made. He must think that his local electorate are incredibly stupid and have short memories if he believes that they cannot recall decisions made by their local authority that they did not like. All of us, particularly those who have been involved in local government, are well aware that local authorities do not always please all the people all the time. People can be annoyed with some decisions, but in local elections most electors have the common sense to make up their minds based on the whole scheme of things, not one issue that may have annoyed them two or three years before. They take the rough with the smooth and decide accordingly on the general performance of the party running the council and the opposition parties.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge offered another curious reason why councils need to be capped—that people decide that, although they are dissatisfied with local government, central Government are to blame. Could they not be right? Perhaps the Government are to blame for the decisions that the council have to make. We have only to think of occasions such as tonight when the Government are giving themselves powers to impose on a council decisions that the voters of that council did not want and clearly voted against. It is understandable but not satisfactory that people react by blaming the local council. When they decide that the Government are to blame, they are perfectly correct.

[Mrs. Maria Fyfe]

One Conservative Member said that one reason for imposing capping was that some people who vote in local elections do not pay rates and so are not entitled to a say. That is a curious argument that we have heard throughout the debates over the years about central Government control of local authorities. It was pointed out that, in reality, nearly everyone paid a share of the rates by making arrangements within families and households. Even if that were not so, it does not seem to have occurred to that Conservative Member that people who do not pay income tax have the right to vote in a general election. Is he saying that that should not be so? If so, let him say so clearly now. The principle is exactly the same: if one is entitled to vote for national Government whether or not one pays taxes, one should be entitled to vote for local government whether or not one is able to contribute to the local authority coffers. To say otherwise is simply an attack on the poor, because the only people who would be ineligible to pay would be those without the funds to do so.

Although it will be 1993 before the poll tax comes to an end, people are still being forced to live with it. Councils that are desperate to spend money on much-needed services are having to advertise and take out large, almost full-page, adverts in newspapers urging people to pay their poll tax bills. People have been under the mistaken impression that they need no longer pay because the Government have put an end to the poll tax. It is an act of gross irresponsibility on the Government's part to allow people to believe that, because the poll tax is being brought to an end, there is no need to pay it. The Government should convey more clearly the message that the poll tax will not come to an end till 1993. They are not facing up to their responsibility to ensure that they play their part in running local authorities. Far from contributing to what councils need, the Government are already capping local authorities in Scotland. The case of Lothian council has already been mentioned.

Earlier in the debate, some of us asked why the Government felt that there should be seven bands, and those fortunate enough to come within the highest band would have to pay only 2·5 times what those on low incomes and in poorer housing who fell in the lowest band would have to pay. I said that surely, if some hon. Members were so wealthy that they were immeasurably better off than others, were in the top band and were voting in the House, they should declare that fact when making their speeches. Conservative Members cried out that that was the politics of envy. In reality, we are talking about the politics of greed and of people who are extremely well off. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, if some people save money, other people —those who are far less well off—end up paying a higher proportion of their low incomes. However, that is not the worst of it: such people pay more and suffer the effects of cuts in local authorities.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Fyfe: I shall give way in a moment.

Conservative Members have argued that we need not believe it when councils forecast large cuts, because they are not necessarily accurate. Conservative Members say, "Don't worry—it won't turn out to be as bad as they predict." Let me tell the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South in particular that the Secretary of State for Scotland is currently forcing Lothian council to make budget cuts of £18·5 million, which is not, as Ian Bell said, a small sum of money in anyone's terms. It is a reality, not a day dream, that Lothian council is having to consider closing schools, old people's homes, children's centres and evening classes, bringing to an end free bus travel for the elderly, and cutting road repairs. Will the Government say which, if any, of those proposals they think would allow acceptable and decent levels of service? They never answer that question, but tell the councils to make the cuts and leave them to pick up the pieces as best they can.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Why does not Lothian council simply adopt the budget increase of Strathclyde—the hon. Lady's authority? If Lothian had done so, it would not have been subjected to selective action.

Mrs. Fyfe: That was an incredible intervention, when we bear in mind that Strathclyde council faces major cuts and will have to decide how to cope with them. *[Interruption.]* The people of Lothian voted for Lothian council's policies because they approved of them.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady and I will ignore the comments of the chaps sitting around her who are trying to stop both of us speaking. Would her point about wealthy people paying more apply also to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who lives in a castle, to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who has done well out of the sale of his autobiography—I congratulate him on that—or to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who lives in a castle and who drives to work in a ruddy great Daimler?

Mrs. Fyfe: The hon. Lady seems to miss the obvious point. Some Opposition Members are considerably better off than the average person, but they are not trying to dodge their responsibilities and get out of paying their fair share. That is the difference. Some Conservative Members are doing that, and have been doing it for years. That is their whole raison d'etre: making sure that the better-off can dodge their responsibilities, sometimes by allowing employers who are subsidised by the taxpayer to pay low wages and sometimes by other dodges that have been thought up in the past 12 years.

Mr. Dalyell: To return to the Minister's intervention, does my hon. Friend accept that, on the figures, Strathclyde receives £914 per capita on the budget estimates, and £733 in respect of Government support per capita? Lothian's figures are £922 and £645 respectively, so the Minister's attempt at a comparison with Strathclyde was quite wicked. The figures for Dumfries and Galloway are £941 and £762. So what has happened to Lothian is a matter of pure political vindictiveness and spite.

Mrs. Fyfe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He made a point about the Secretary of State's own area earlier, and the right hon. Gentleman failed to respond to it.

I ask again: which cuts should Lothian make which the Government believe would be acceptable? People voted for those services and it is sheer effrontery on the part of the Government, who can muster only 10 seats in Scotland and only tiny minorities in local authorities, to turn aside electors' decisions in this way.

Ian Bell's article in *The Observer* has been mentioned. He was of course right to attack the nature of the cuts and the way in which the Government are undemocratically imposing their will on the people who voted for the services provided in Lothian. The article comes up with one way of opposing such cuts which the Labour party has not yet contemplated. Bell asks:

"Why not resign and allow the Tories to administer their own cuts? Why not fight local elections on this one issue?"

I do not see the point in—perfectly legally—resigning a seat and standing again for election. Councillors who had resigned their seats would have to stand on doorsteps asking local electors who voted for them in the local elections to do so again. Householders would want to know why, to which councillors would have to reply that they were seeking authority for the council to keep to the budget that it had set. Householders would rightly say, "We gave you that authority when we voted for you in the local elections. Why do you want it all over again?" If elections are held anyway and these councillors are re-elected, will the Government cave in? Not a bit of it. They will continue to impose their will because they believe that they have a sacred right to impose their views on local authorities, regardless of the outcome of local elections.

I certainly admire Mr. Bell's support for people to have what they voted for, but I suggest that his remedy does not work. I keep on telling people that if they believe seriously that local government should be local government and not an arm of the state—if they believe that it should have the right to run local authorities—there is no recourse but to vote at the general election for a party that genuinely believes in local autonomy, local democracy and local government. That is the answer. It is not an exciting one, but it is the truth, and soon the time will come when people can vote for such a party.

8.54 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Like many other hon. Members I came to the House with a background of quite a few years as a local councillor at county borough and district level. That was a satisfactory and worthwhile role, yet until I had been in this place for a year or two I had not truly appreciated the enormously important role that local government plays in our national life. I would be the first to admit, eight years on, that I probably appreciate even more now the necessary part that local authorities play and that they must go on playing it.

I am a great devotee of the role of local authorities. Although I understand the growth of anxiety in the past couple of years, I do not subscribe to the view that local authorities are too troublesome or that local finance is too complicated—"Scrap it all; let's do it all from Westminster." It would be tragic if that view were adopted, and I hope that it does not get to the starting gate.

Way back about 20 years ago, there was an understanding between this place and local authorities that here in Westminster resided the sovereign power, the law makers and the guardians of what the nation could or could not afford to spend. The parties were agreed on that. I do not recall capping in those days but I do recall that if the Government of the day in their wisdom wanted to rein in expenditure, as was their right, local authorities did their best to comply. All that was necessary was a circular from the Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, or whatever it was called in those far-off days, and we in local government did our best in response. It never occurred to us in a major county borough such as Nottingham, whether Labour or Conservative-controlled, to do otherwise, because we accepted that the Government reside in Westminster.

All this changed, sad to say, when too many people began to think—and, almost by accident, legislation began to speak—of local government instead of local authorities. They began to think of local authorities as little governments in exile with almost unlimited powers in their areas. Piling absurdity on absurdity, such people developed the notion that someone else should pay.

The Labour party talks about the generality of taxpayers. In an intervention, I drew attention to the large sum that the Liberal Democrats say should have been given to local government. I do not believe that that sort of money is ever likely to be available. The change in philosophy and the loss of understanding between central and local government led to everything going badly wrong. The Liverpools, Sheffields, Hackneys and Lambeths have much to answer for when we reflect on the relationship between this place and local authorities over the past few years.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend agree that the real tragedy that underlines the stupidity of the cuts that have been introduced by some Labour-controlled councils is that the most vulnerable in our society are hurt? Social services budgets are cut and old people's homes are faced with closure. Even in areas such as my constituency, libraries and other facilities are proposed for closure. In many instances, there is nowhere else for people to go. It is the very people who socialists tend to say they are trying to protect who are hurt the most in Labour-controlled authorities.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend is right. Whenever a Labour authority is faced with trying to restrain its budget, its immediate reaction is, "Who are the most vulnerable in our society? If those people are hurt, there will be headlines in the local press. We shall be able to say that the wicked Tory Government are forcing us to stop meals-on-wheels services or to cut home-help provision." It is always the sector that deals with the most vulnerable people which is under threat. Those are the people who are nailed to the wall by the so-called caring Labour party.

If the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats want a vast sum to be found in addition to that which is already spent, and that is no small sum, and if expenditure is to be unlimited, who do they think will pick up the bill? I fear that those who are in a position to do so—the enterprising, the highly educated and the highly qualified—will not stay around waiting to be robbed, and penal taxation comes down to plain robbery.

Under the Labour Government there was penal taxation. Income tax was levied at 83 per cent. in some instances, and it was possible to be faced with 98 per cent. taxation. Even the basic rate which the ordinary working-class person paid was 37 per cent.—and that was before national insurance. In those days, we came to realise, as we are saying now, that a Government can have 40 per cent. of something, which is better than the Labour Government's take, which was 100 per cent. of nothing. In many instances, the Labour Administration lost because of emigration. That must not happen again.

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

When the opposition parties talk about unlimited spending, we must remind them that the able, the skilled and the highly qualified will pack up their bags and go. It is a small world, and we cannot ask people to stay loyal when they are being robbed through penal taxation.

I have no doubt that it is necessary for the Bill to be enacted. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, "Oh that we had had draconian capping powers when we voted willingly for the concept of the community charge." When the bills came through for the first year—I accept that this is a simple rule of thumb but the result would have been not one cut—we could have provided that no local authority could spend a penny more than it had spent the previous year plus the rate of inflation. I agree that that is a somewhat simplistic approach but it serves to make my point.

If that approach had been adopted, the community charge overall would have been £2·5 billion less than it was, roughly £70 less for every adult in the United Kingdom. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South said, "Oh that we had had that sort of limit imposed when we changed from the rating system to the community charge." Who knows, perhaps the charge would still have failed, but we would have had a charge reasonably in line with what we thought it would be when we voted for the enabling legislation. If that had been done, it is possible that we would now be in a different ball park.

I hope that the powers in the Bill will be as tough, or even tougher, when we have the new tax. For the first, perhaps, two years I would like to see an absolute limit on spending, so that the new system can be seen and judged on its true merits—and, unlike the old system, cannot be wrecked because authorities up their spending to discredit it. Let us not fool ourselves; many local authorities were determined to ensure that, whether they agreed or disagreed with the community charge, they wrecked it by whatever means at their disposal.

In my county council, the charge was upped by over £100 for every adult in our city. I thought that that was outrageous, but we could do nothing because my lords and masters—my senior colleagues on the Front Bench—never believed that local authorities could be so wicked as to screw their constituents to the wall by charging them an extra £100 for the pleasure.

Even now, after all the publicity and the details that appear on our community charge bills, I still receive the usual crop of queries from constituents. They ask why on earth they are charged some £20 for excess county council spending when they live in the city. If ever there was a case for a great city such as Nottingham to be able once again to run its own affairs, what has happened in the past couple of years says it all. That change cannot come about too soon—yesterday, please, Minister.

It is a pity that, having taken powers to cap authorities, we have not taken powers to force local authorities to collect their dues and taxes. Uncollected dues and taxes should not be lumped on to the backs of the innocent majority. Perhaps the district auditor should have the power to take action where, in his view, the local authority has been dilatory in sending out bills, never mind lax about collection. As a result of that laxity, a further financial burden is placed on the long-suffering charge payers—usually the majority of honest people.

The percentage of local spending funded from central taxation has now been increased so that only 14 per cent. is raised locally. We must have a system that avoids the trap that even the previous Labour Government recognised. Those of us who were on local authorities in those days—the 1970s—know that to be true. Today, a project may cost £100,000, and local councillors may say, "Never mind, we only have to find £14,000 and Westminster—the taxpayer—will find the other £86,000."

Capping is a necessity. It is even more essential when we are dealing with a ratio of 86 per cent. to 14 per cent. That gearing effect worries me most. If a local authority has to raise only 14 per cent. of £100 of spending and only spends £100, the Secretary of State's figures, which were quoted by both Front Benches, will hold water. But if that local authority spends £114, the poor charge payer must find £28. Therefore, his charge doubles. We cannot permit that because it would be an unjust reflection on a good Bill and a good scheme. We must ensure that that does not happen.

The valuation is set out in clauses 3 to 5. Although the old rating system may have been inaccurate, anomalous or difficult to understand, the valuations were precise. Until a few years ago, if someone carried out a home improvement which I believe added less than £30 to the rateable value, that was ignored. If the improvement added more than £30 to the rateable value, the home owner was penalised for spending his own money on his property and doing what many would argue was a national service by preserving the state of our housing stock.

The message from the Government seems to be that we should have banding for local taxation purposes. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meant what he said when replying to my intervention when he presented his case earlier, I hope that it will be clear that there will not be precise valuations and that properties will be placed in particular bands. There must be no disincentive to the generality of home improvements, and people should not be frightened to spend their money on their own homes in case they are forced into a higher band.

It was said earlier that the value should change only when a house is sold. I hope that we do not pursue that path. If houses are valued according to broad bands, houses in a particular street that are all much of a muchness should be in the same band. It would be ridiculous if a house in that street was sold and attracted a higher tax simply because it had changed hands a few weeks before. I hope that all properties of a similar nature in a street will stay in the same band.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Sit down.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I will sit down when I am ready. I was told to continue until 9.15 pm

It has been said that there will be problems about appeals. Under the banding system someone would have to be convinced that the property was in the wrong band before appealing. If someone thinks that the property is broadly in the right band or somewhere near the top, he is unlikely to appeal in case the appeal body shoves the property into a higher band.

I hope that we mean what we say and that there will be rough valuations placing properties in bands and that houses will not change in value if home improvements are carried out and that they will not change in value for

taxation purposes on resale. If I can have those assurances, this will be a first-class Bill and it will pave the way to the new local tax structure which I hope will be presented to the House in this year's Queen's Speech so that it can be up and running before the next general election.

9.13 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): In a sense, we are discussing two Bills today—a Local Government Finance Bill and a Local Government Valuation Bill—because the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill falls clearly into two parts. The local government finance part is an extension of the 1988 legislation that introduced the poll tax and it is in keeping with the poll tax principles. We have not begun to get rid of the poll tax. We are building upon the earlier provisions for England and Wales contained in the 1988 legislation. The valuation part sets up what the Government call the council tax. I will not spend much time considering that as there will be a general election before the Government can introduce that principle and it will bite the dust in the long run. I should like to speak to clause 1 and about my authority in north-east Derbyshire, because that authority is seriously affected by the Bill.

Much nonsense is talked about the operation of the standard spending assessment and its application in capping district authorities. District authorities are placed in a much worse position by capping than are larger authorities, because they do not have the leeway to manoeuvre with funds. My authority has a current budget of £7·3 million and would be £1·5 million or 27 per cent. over the SSA.

According to the chop logic of the Government, that council is profligate and irresponsible, but nothing could be further from the truth. All the information supplied by the Audit Commission shows that my authority is well run and efficient and that it operates according to the normal tendering provisions. For example, its direct labour force has recently obtained the refuse collection franchise. However, it is close to the bottom of almost every list of grants and SSAs per head of the population or charge payers. That applies in the context of the 26 authorities with which it was compared by the Audit Commission.

A list in answer to a parliamentary question that I asked on 5 December puts my authority at No. 346 out of 366 authorities in terms of the percentage of grant that it receives from central Government. That being the case, one would expect it to have certain characteristics that the Government would think ideal, because it would seem to need little money. However, of the 366 authorities in England, only one receives a smaller proportion of SSA per charge payer—east Dorset.

That area and north-east Derbyshire provide a stark contrast. East Dorset is represented by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who has a majority of over 22,000, and by the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) who has a majority of almost 12,000. North-east Derbyshire is represented by me with a majority of 3,700 and by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who has a majority of 14,000. I understand that north Dorset feels considerably aggrieved about the SSA level that has been adopted for it but north-east Derbyshire's grievance is even greater.

The details of the standard spending assessment require a full debate in the House. If I had the opportunity to speak in such a debate, I would deal with how the SSA is assessed, the different factors that are taken into account and the nonsense of the system in the context of north-east Derbyshire, which is seriously handicapped by the different methods of calculation. It is left with very little money from central Government and is now being handicapped by the total SSA level that will be provided. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has yet to speak, I do not have time to describe that aspect in detail.

However, I hope that the Minister will agree to meet a deputation from north-east Derbyshire, to explain the iniquities of the SSA as it applies in that area. It has become doubly dangerous. Before, we had higher poll tax levels than we would have had with a reasonable SSA. Now, we are likely to face poll tax capping and to be unable to provide essential services. Once one takes into account the statutory provisions and the parish precept, which has not been ignored in the figures, little leeway is left. Non-statutory money remains, so that expenditure of £2·5 million would have to be reduced to £1 million, which would have a devastating effect on a whole range of services. I hope that the Minister will agree to meet our deputation.

9.20 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Bill is clearly born of the chaos that was the poll tax. Over the past few months, we have witnessed the failure of every policy for which Government supporters have argued, every principle for which they have fought, and every prejudice that they have defended with the blind faith of the zealot.

We were told by Ministers—the Secretary of State for Scotland was prominent among them—that the poll tax would make it possible to abolish the sad and arbitrary use of central Government capping powers. Responsibility was to be built into the system, and the electorate would be master of the instance. All that is in the past. Accountability is no longer in fashion. It has become one of the many casualties of the Government's disordered retreat. We have seen also the abandonment of the 20 per cent. rule, although that is to live on illogically—because, if it is inappropriate or unjust in 1993 or 1994, it is equally so now.

We have seen the most unlikely people come to the Dispatch Box to defend the principle of a household tax for which only the householder is liable. I remember the abuse—I use that word advisedly—to which my right hon. and hon. Friends were subjected when they tried to defend exactly the same principle. It is extraordinary to hear the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Scotland say that one of the virtues of the new council tax is that it includes in the payment net 90 per cent. of the citizens of this country—when they would have treated with contempt any such claim for the old rating system.

We have seen a display of intellectual flexibility that beggars belief, as the same right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have swallowed their pride, capital valuation, and the rate poundage system. I say this to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who I understand is standing in for the Secretary of State. If, a few months ago, I had come to the Dispatch Box and offered him a vision of a property-based tax and a capital valuation system that

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

provided an individual valuation for each property and then applied a rate poundage—and suggested one or two other small changes to the rebate system, with a small concession here and there—and had asked the hon. Member for Eastwood if that would do, he would have condemned it root and branch. He would have said that it represented a return to the old rating system and as such was totally unacceptable. If the hon. Gentleman is intellectually honest, he knows that would have been his

It is amazing what party loyalty will do to principle. The hon. Member for Eastwood and most of his right hon. and hon. Friends are examples of intellectual schizophrenia. They have been compelled to make the bitter pill more palatable. As everyone knows, the cost is £4·25 billion. The Secretary of State made a remarkable reference to the Chancellor's generosity, as though he had taken out his cheque book and dashed off a quick personal promissory note for the sum of £4·25 billion—when, at the end of the day, every person in the country with purchasing power will make up that shortfall by paying more value added tax.

It is clear above all that local democracy will be the victim. The Conservative party once saw itself as the defender of local democracy. It had an honourable tradition of arguing that local communities should run their own affairs, and ought not to be bullied or overshadowed by the power of central Government. Yet members of that same party now say that it is not only right—as a temporary expedient, to get them out of an electoral difficulty—that local government should control only 13 or 14 per cent. of the revenue that it spends, but that such a concept should be enshrined in our system in a way that I think is quite indefensible.

We are promised a great future of fierce and determined capping. There will be no diversion of resources, whether it be for a child at school or for an elderly person looking for improved day care facilities, without the say-so of central Government.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman, flushed with moral indignation, is complaining about the Government developing their policy. He belongs to a party that has said for many years that the rating system is totally wrong and should be scrapped as it is unfair and unreasonable. I understand that the Labour party is now proposing its solution to the problem—a fair rating system. What is the difference between a rating system and a fair rating system? That is the sort of thing of which Alice Through the Looking-Glass would be proud.

Mr. Dewar: If we had time, I could explain to the hon. Gentleman the difference between a fair rating system and an unfair system. He could find that difference by reading our policy and that of the Conservative party.

The Secretary of State for Scotland courteously wrote to me on 31 May about the Bill. I found it extraordinary that he said that he did not accept

"that the proposals in the Bill represent a major change in the relationship between central and local government. The provisions in the Bill concerning charge capping do no more than bring my powers in this area into line with those of my colleagues south of the border."

It occurred to me that "into line" was an appropriate phrase; it has the ring of the drill square about it, which, I suspect, tells us much about the Government's approach.

I must tell the Secretary of State that this is an important change. It is only a part of what is happening, but it is an integral part of a substantial shift in power between central and local government that is not desirable and about which we protest.

Let us consider what is being proposed. The test of reasonableness in Scotland will go. Section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966—the Secretary of State for the Environment had clearly never heard of it—is the foundation of the present powers that lie with the Secretary of State. I have been in Scottish politics for a long time and have spent a good part of the past decade poring over amendments to that section, but it has survived and is still part of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987. The test, as anyone interested in local government in Scotland knows, was whether the expenditure was unreasonable and excessive. We have got rid of the test of reasonableness; it will be only whether the expenditure is excessive.

Even on that there used to be guidelines, because the Secretary of State had to take account of the

"financial and other relevant circumstances of the area"

of the authority. That goes as well.

That section offered little protection. People might tell me that I should not build too strong a case on it, but at least that test had to be applied and the Secretary of State had to meet that hurdle, but now it is gone. All that we are left with is that the test of excessive is what the Secretary of State says it is—what the Secretary of State decrees. That is a licence for arbitrary authority, which the House should not lightly grant.

There has been much talk about the experience of Lothian region this year. I do not want to go into the figures, but what has happened to Lothian is not an encouraging precedent for granting the powers that the Secretary of State is asking the House to grant in the Bill. As many Scottish Members will know, this year Lothian received the lowest grant per head of any regional council in Scotland. Its average expenditure is well below the average of regional councils in Scotland, but if it had received the average grant per head of regional councils in Scotland, it would have been worth more than £170 for every poll tax payer in the region. That puts in some perspective the way in which even the present powers are being used by the Secretary of State, never mind the powers that he will have when we further enfeeble the safgeguards and remove what few checks and balances statute allows.

The Secretary of State said in his letter to me that there will be no change in how grant-aided expenditure is calculated. I must accept that, as I do not believe that he would be inaccurate on that. Grant-aided expenditure is acceptable—we have all learnt to live with, if not love, the client group approach which is used to distribute the Scottish total among individual authorities, because there must be some way of distributing. It is a matter of argument, debate and dispute, but we all recognise that that machinery must exist. It is totally different if grant-aided expenditure becomes an arbitrary benchmark for penalties and a point beyond which an authority cannot spend even if it wishes to do so, if the electorate at the ballot box are willing to authorise that expenditure,, and if there is a crying need in the community.

I cannot agree with the Secretary of State's view that this is not a matter of fundamental change. We are facing a difficult time in local government. On top of what we are

discussing, we have the threat of a reform of the structure which is designed to destroy, or at least to weaken. There is also a problem of morale. The Secretary of State should not underestimate that problem. It will increase greatly if the House puts on the statute book the changes embodied in the Bill.

I turn briefly, inevitably, to the valuation provisions of the Bill, which are also of great interest. It would be churlish not to say immediately that I welcome the small, but important, U-turn by the Scottish Office. The Secretary of State made it clear to the press in briefings that control of the valuation process would lie with the Inland Revenue valuation office. That is not now the case. The assessors—who have the knowledge and expertise to do the job—have been reinstated. That is right not only because they are best qualified to do that job but because they are a small group who took hard knocks during the row over the poll tax—sometimes from my side of the political divide and certainly from the system. Most of those I know well disliked the system that they had to administer, but they did their duty. When valuation was reinstated as part of local government finance, a proposal to deprive assessors of the duty of doing that work was ingratitude which was not entirely honourable. I am glad that the Secretary of State had second thoughts.

In a letter to me on 31 May, the Secretary of State said that it was important, if the council tax is to come into operation on 1 April 1993, to get the valuation process under way. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will say whether he is confident that the Government are on track for April 1993, whether they will make the date or whether he will hedge his bets on 1994, as the Secretary of State for the Environment appeared to do a week or two ago.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will comment further on the interesting provision that the assessors will be under the direction of the Inland Revenue commissioners. I understand from the Secretary of State for the Environment—I intervened on this point—that this was merely to harmonise valuation law. My impression was that it would be about the niceties of the contractors' principle and such matters. What will the relationship be?

This is an important matter. Traditionally, although an assessor is provided with the wherewithal to carry out his task by regional councils—which supply premises and budgets—he is totally independent and uses his professional judgment and discretion. It is hard enough to establish the credibility of any form of local government taxation, but it is important that the people carrying out the valuation—if it is that kind of system—are seen to be above political control and beyond reproach. The assessors have established that reputation. I regret the fact that we will not have the in-depth examination in Committee that we would normally have, as the Bill will be taken in short measure on the Floor of the House. It is important that the Under-Secretary gives a substantial definition of that relationship.

Banding is another important matter. I do not intend to spend much time on this point, but it is well known that the Labour party believes that the spread within the system is not equitable. Undoubtedly—to be fair, the Secretary of State has never hidden this fact but has paraded it—there is a measure of protection for those at the top end of the housing range, which inevitably means that those in modest properties pay more than they should. The Secretary of State said in the House on 23 April 1991 at column 938 of *Hansard* that the impact of banding was "dampened" by the way in which the system has been adjusted or, as some of us would say, rigged.

If we are talking about credibility, perhaps the Secretary of State will consider the credibility of the figures that he has produced in connection with the new form of rating that he proposes to introduce. I quote from what I thought was a splendid letter of 8 May, which he was kind enough to send to me. It is a description of the valuation methods which led to the figures that were so proudly unveiled. It states:

"it is important not to confuse the initial exercise to produce illustrative examples, which was essentially an in-house exercise conducted by IRVO on the basis of data which they already have for the purposes of carrying out their functions, with the much larger exercise that will be required for the actual distribution of properties in appropriate bands. I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by publishing details of the methodology of the initial exercise which was essentially statistical".

The last phrase is a magnificent piece of "Yes, Minister" speak for saying that there was no attempt to value properties at all. The whole thing was done, I suspect, by starting with a predetermined answer and working backwards to the desired result. It carries no credibility.

Briefly, I want to make the important point about the absolutely startling dishonesty of the Conservative attempt to suggest that one could run the system that they outlined without any form of regular revaluation, or perhaps without any revaluation at all. I shall read the remarkable quotation from the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science which appeared in the *Municipal Journal* of 24 May. He said:

"Once a property has gone into a band, we think it will stay in that band virtually in perpetuity."

That is a staggering prospect and it is why I was so interested in the exchanges that I had with the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) whom I respect as being something of an independent on such matters. The hon. Gentleman was naturally anxious to see the back of the poll tax and therefore anxious to endorse the system now offered to him. However, he said that we could not have what the Labour party suggested to get the system up and running quickly, which was to use the old valuation roll. It might, he said—this is an interesting concession—be possible in Scotland, where, after all, the last revaluation was carried out in 1985, but it was not possible in England, where the previous revaluation was as long ago as 1973.

However, the hon. Gentleman went on to argue how splendid it was that we would not need a revaluation, and I challenged him about this but he held to it. The trouble with his position is that, if one takes the view that one can put a property into a band in the year dot and then come back some time in perpetuity and the property will still be in that band, why not do it with the 1973 revaluation?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman will concede on reflection that there is a world of difference between a system in which all properties must be valued or for which one must use a total historic value, and a system in which one allocates properties into a series of set bands and recognises that, in general, they will move within an area in roughly the same proportion.

Mr. Dewar: I must confess that I did not understand that, but I shall read it carefully. If we assume that an honest attempt is being made to value individual

[Mr. Dewar]

properties and to put them into a band, the nature of fluctuations in fashion, in demand and in property prices will mean that the valuation base becomes outdated. That is why we are constantly told that the whole problem of the valuation and rating system was that it required valuations periodically because the rating base became outdated. If that is the case, to suggest that we can keep property in bands in perpetuity is a striking dishonesty.

At the end of the day, we shall find that under the pressure of events and even if the scheme sees them through for a short time if they get that opportunity, the Conservatives will be driven more and more to the Labour party's views on this issue as they have already been on others during the past few months.

I believe and I fear that we shall face a bitter period of uncertainty. There is a genuine problem, which is that, in community associations, in residents' associations, and in ordinary homes, people imagine that the poll tax has already gone. The problem of collection is becoming almost insurmountable. At the end of April 1991, after a full two years of the poll tax in Scotland, the uncollected revenue was £427 million, or one quarter of the income from the poll tax during that period. In the first month of the new year, the total take in Scotland was £12 million, or £3 per head for every poll tax in Scotland. If that goes on, we face a catastrophe. Strathclyde, not because it has been capped by Lothian and for no other reason than the collapse of its income, already seeks £21 million of additional cuts at the beginning of this financial year.

Against the background of crisis, the shabby little exercise that we have been offered tonight is totally unimportant. The Secretary of State for the Environment put great emphasis on what he said was, in Scotland, the increase in expenditure of local authorities. My understanding is that the revenue expenditure during the period of this Government has gone up by 9·6 per cent. in real terms. Capital spending, excluding housing which involves a different financial system, has dropped by 8·2 per cent. I believe that I am justified in suggesting that, if one compared that with the record of the Scottish Office over the same period, one would probably find that local government came out well, even if one applied the criteria that the Conservatives want us to apply.

It is extraordinary how, under electoral pressure and concentrating on saving their electoral skins, the Government can shake out the pennies when the time comes. I will not listen to them preaching to my colleagues in local government, who face problems, about fiscal or political responsibility.

The Bill is a paving Bill: it paves the way to the wrong scheme on the wrong timetable. I do not accuse Ministers of a lack of urgency, but I accuse them—and the electorate will accuse them—of having the wrong targets and wrong-headed objectives.

9.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): A number of Conservative and Opposition Members, such as the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), have rightly and properly used the occasion to make a number of purely constituency points. All of them have been noted by my right hon. and hon. Friends, and by myself if they refer to Scotland, although I hope that the House will appreciate that, in the time available, I will concentrate on the broad principles that have underlain the debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), in his excellent speech, said that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) had nothing to say. That criticism was a little unfair. The hon. Member for Dagenham had a great deal to say. The problem was that it was mostly the product of a fairly vivid imagination. We heard conspiracy theory after conspiracy theory. To be helpful, I must say to the hon. Member for Dagenham that if, in the next Parliament, in opposition, he wishes to enhance his personal income, he has a considerable career as a political novelist in front of him.

The second point to make about the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham is that he has a genial and cheerful brass neck. He talked about U-turns. I have counted the changes in Labour party policy on the issue of local government finance since 1987. I make it that it has had 67 different policy positions—a U-turn every three weeks. It has had the local income tax, the roof tax, the floor tax, a supplement on national income tax and a combination of them all.

The third point to be made about the speeches of the hon. Members for Dagenham and for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—I shall come back to the serious points made by the hon. Member for Garscadden—is that they seem to sing a different tune. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West, said that he understood the position of the hon. Member for Dagenham on capping. My right hon. Friend is rather better at understanding the hon. Gentleman than I am. I am still not entirely clear about his position. As I understand it, he is against capping.

In contrast, the hon. Member for Garscadden quoted favourably several times section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966, which was introduced by the Labour party and created a form of rate capping. I agree that, if the hon. Member for Garscadden ever became Secretary of State for Scotland, he might wish to return to the provisions of the 1966 Act. But that is clearly incompatible with the position of the hon. Member for Dagenham.

In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) said that the key factor was the total cost to the local taxpayer, which we have reduced significantly. My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) rightly said that the Government have switched the burden from the local taxpayer to the central taxpayer. The position of the hon. Member for Dagenham on that is perfectly clear. I listened to him on the "Today" programme on Radio 4 on 26 March 1991. He said that Labour planned to increase the burden of council spending met locally from the current figure of about 14 per cent. to about 20 per cent. Would that apply in Scotland?

Mr. Gould: The Under-Secretary should recognise that he owes an obligation, as do his ministerial colleagues, at least to treat the figures on a common basis. If the Minister checks what the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House earlier in the week to which he refers, he will see that the Secretary of State claimed that the switch to VAT had reduced the proportion of local government

spending accounted for by local government revenue from 34 per cent. to 22 per cent. That was a clear statement. The fact that the Secretary of State, the Prime Minister and now the Under-Secretary have chosen to alter the basis of the calculation so that they judge the proportion of a different sum——

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): No.

Mr. Gould: Yes, that is entirely the case. If the Secretary of State does not understand that, we have a good insight into why local government finance is in such a mess.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member for Dagenham had a perfectly good opportunity earlier to make his own speech. My point is simple: do his figures apply to Scotland or not? We had no answer to that point from the hon. Member for Garscadden either. On issue after issue, the debate has shown that there are differences—and key differences—between the Labour party north and south of the border.

Mr. Marlow: Is not the key difference that we have found out today from the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that, if there were ever the misfortune of the return of a Labour Government in this country, what they would do with local government finance would be to let it rip?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. A Labour Government would say to Lambeth, Liverpool and every loony lefty council in the land, "Spend, spend and spend again." That would be their policy.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: I shall come to the question of Lothian, which was raised by the hon. Gentleman.

The point about policy which comes out of Labour party speeches made north and south of the border is that there are significant differences between the Labour party in Scotland and the Labour party in England and Wales. Frankly, it is a case of one left hand not knowing what the other left hand is doing.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Whatever may happen in Lambeth or to the loony left south of the border, does my hon. Friend appreciate that the loony left north of the border, in Tayside region, has taken on more than 300 extra employees in the past three weeks?

Mr. Stewart: As always, my hon. and learned Friend makes an apt and accurate point. I hope that the community charge payers of Tayside pay full attention to his remarks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) spoke from experience of the importance of the role of local government. He pleaded for independence for Nottingham council. That is not the subject of this debate, but I am sure that his plea has been noted by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

One of the key purposes of the Bill is to extend capping powers. Those powers were rightly praised and justified by my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West and my hon. Friends the Members for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and for Hornchurch, who was right about revaluation. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was also right to say that the proposed powers are necessary as they are in the national interest.

I want to deal with the three major points that were made by Opposition Members, especially those representing Scotland. The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about the capping powers.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry that I missed the hon. Gentleman's speech, and I shall give way to him.

Dr. Godman: I am extremely grateful to the Minister, who displays his characteristic courtesy by giving way. On the system of appeals north of the border, can the Minister say something about the appeal procedure vis-a-vis the assessment of valuations of domestic properties?

Mr. Stewart: That is a perfectly fair point, which was also raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West and a number of other hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will be aware that the consultation on our proposals is continuing. We shall consider carefully what those consulted say about appeals. However, that issue is a matter for the main Bill which we shall introduce in the autumn. I assure the hon. Gentleman that that Bill will contain the appropriate provisions to set up an appeals mechanism. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular points that he wishes to put to us on this matter, we look forward to receiving them.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about the capping powers in Scotland. The major purpose of the Bill is to introduce stronger capping powers as the present ones are limited. Some local authorities have completely ignored accountability. They have flagrantly ignored the interests of their charge payers this year. As a result, the charge levels set by local authorities for 1991-92 have increased, on average, by 30 per cent.

I believe that it is our duty to protect local taxpayers from the excesses of some local authorities. It is also our duty to ensure that the fundamental shift in the balance of taxation brought about by the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 has the intended effect of keeping local taxes down to a reasonable level.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I have already given way several times, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue.

The new level of local charges made possible by the 1991 Act must be passed on to local people. The new capping powers will enable us to do just that by making local authorities exercise restraint on spending. They will protect the interests of central and local taxpayers.

In the autumn, my right hon. Friend will make a declaratory statement on procedure for capping criteria, as was done for England last year. Authorities that budget in excess of those criteria will then be subject to capping, which will constitute a much more straightforward approach to capping in Scotland.

The hon. member for Garscadden also asked about the position on valuations in Scotland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in his initial statement that we shall consult on how that will work most effectively in Scotland. The Scottish assessors and the Inland Revenue valuation office have been working together for about five years to achieve the harmonisation of non-domestic rating. In the case of the council tax, we

[Mr. Stewart]

made it clear that supervision of the banding process at a national level would be the responsibility of the valuation office.

A direction-making power will be given to the valuation office under the provisions of the Bill. That will simply ensure consistency of treatment north and south of the border. I should have thought that that was a perfectly reasonable objective and it is surprising, therefore, that the hon. Member for Garscadden has criticised it. His criticisms sit oddly with the comments of the president of the Scottish Assessors Association, who described the Government's decision as sensible and said that he felt comfortable about the role of the Inland Revenue at the Great Britain level.

What are the Labour party's policies? It plans to introduce a fair rates system based not only on notional rental values but on a mixture of capital values and rebuilding, maintenance and repair costs. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) wants to return to the domestic rates system in Scotland. I remind him of the wise words of his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who said that rates were

"an irrational, inefficient, highly resented form of taxation. If a thing does not make sense—and the rating system makes no sense whatsoever—the right thing to do is to abolish it".

The Labour party wants to bring back that system.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked me about Lothian. He suggested that in all possible tests Lothian's expenditure was no greater than that of Dumfries and Galloway. I shall answer that serious question with two comparisons. The charge that was originally set by Lothian was £420. The charge originally set by Dumfries and Galloway was £242. Lothian's budget was more than 12 per cent. above its grant-aided expenditure figure, whereas the budget for Dumfries and Galloway was below the grant-aided expenditure figure. Opposition Members have alleged that Lothian's level of grant was unfair. That grant is assessed through the client group approach, which is agreed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Office. If Opposition Members feel that the grant is unfair, why do they not ask COSLA about it, because that is not what it is saying?

The Bill lays the foundation for the orderly introduction of the council tax from 1 April 1993. The extension of our capping powers will mean that irresponsible local authorities cannot cynically exploit the run-up to the council tax and burden their charge payers with unacceptably high charges.

We are determined to ensure that the authorities do not frustrate our objective of keeping charges down to acceptable levels by using the considerable extra sums that we are providing to fuel higher spending. Unlike Opposition Members, we have firm and realistic proposals, which today we are beginning to implement. We have acted and brought the Bill before the House. The debate has shown that the Opposition have no realistic policies. In so far as they do have policies, they are totally irresponsible. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 275, Noes 200.

Division No. 154] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hat'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambaSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas

McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan

Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*	Wilson, Brian
Wareing, Robert N.	Winnick, David
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*	Worthington, Tony
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*	Wray, Jimmy
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*	
Wigley, Dafydd	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Williams, Rt Hon Alan	**Mr. Frank Haynes and**
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*	**Mr. Allen McKay.**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill *[Money]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of such sums as may be required to enable a valuation to be carried out, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, of all domestic properties in Great Britain, including sums required—

(a) to enable the Secretary of State to make grants to regional or islands councils towards their expenditure for the purposes of, or otherwise in connection with, the valuation; and

(b) to meet administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in making any such grants.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I will not detain the House long, because I do not believe that we should sit after 10 pm on any evening; but I cannot let the money resolution go by without commenting on the fact that we are about to embark on expenditure in excess of £250 million. The Government often chide the Labour party on the ground that, whenever there is a problem, it throws money at it; yet every time the Government introduce proposals on local government finance, it costs the rest of us a great deal. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members below the Bar kindly leave the Chamber quietly or come and join us, please?

Mr. Blunkett: The sum of £250 million would seem very large were it not for the fact that, as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury revealed on 21 January, excluding non-collection costs, the community charge—or poll tax—cost us a staggering £6·1 billion in increased expenditure from central Government in the years 1989 to 1991 inclusive. I suppose that £250 million looks positively slim against that.

However, we are not clear about the final sum that will be required to undertake the revaluation. As was revealed today during Second Reading of the Bill, we are not clear on what basis the valuation will take place. We are not sure whether it will be based on capital values or on capital values plus. We are not even sure whether it will be a sampling valuation to place properties in bands, or whether there will be a comprehensive valuation of individual properties.

The money resolution refers to the valuation of individual properties. It refers to

"all domestic properties in Great Britain".

To anyone who knows anything about the valuation system, that implies that each individual property will be individually assessed. However, every other Government statement, and clause 3 of the Bill, suggest that there will be sample valuing assisted by estate agents, who have a vested interest in increasing the price of property, from which they get a cut.

Had the Government chosen tonight to accept our solutions, the amount necessary to allocate to the valuation process would have been less. It could have been done using existing valuation staff over a rational period. it could have been done while we returned to the rating system, with the valuations from 1973 in England and

Wales and from 1985 in Scotland. That would have meant implementing the alternative from 1 April next year, and would have given a breathing space for the valuation process to be carried out sensibly. It would have allowed genuine consultations to take place, rather than our introducing Bills before the consultation period was over.

We could then have saved £3 billion over the next two years in under-collected tax, administrative costs and in the collection process for the poll tax. In other words, that £3 billion could have defended and protected services; it could have bought teacher time, home helps and nursery places. The Government are going to squander that money in addition to the £250 million to which the money resolution relates.

The money resolution throws bad money after bad money. I wish that we could get that message across in the media, but the media are interested in only one issue at a time. I received a letter from the director-general of the BBC, who explained that he could not cover one poll tax issue because his television crews were covering a health service issue at the time. The BBC has been brought to such penury by the Government that it can manage to cover only one major event a day.

We should make the media interested in the expenditure of sums like £250 million and why we are wasting £3 billion over the next two years by staggering on with the poll tax into 1994 instead of getting rid of it by April next year. Perhaps we could make people in the media interested in that by making them aware of what the banding system and the valuation process will mean for their properties. They should become aware that estate agents will push up the prices of their houses to ensure that they are in a higher band and pay more than would otherwise be necessary. If we could do all that, it would be possible to debate the money resolution seriously.

The Opposition know that it will cost a great deal of money to carry out the valuation. We wish that it could be carried out sensibly and rationally over a reasonable period. We also wish that we were getting rid of the poll tax by 1 April, but the Government will pay the price when the general election eventually comes.

10.21 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I want to raise a few points in respect of the financial effects of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill. The Bill's explanatory and financial memorandum states blandly, under the heading "Financial effects of the Bill":

"The charge capping provisions of the Bill have no significant effects on central government expenditure."

Of course they do not. The Bill demonstrates the Government's centralisation of power. They are issuing an order or decree to local authorities which, for 100 years or more, have exercised their own tax-gathering powers without the interference or involvement of central Government, by virtue of the democratic accountability of local authorities to their local electorate. Issuing a centralised jackbooted decree in the way in which the Government are exercising the charge-capping powers does not cost much more than the price of a postage stamp. However, the cost to local residents in terms of cuts in education, services for the mentally handicapped, social services and a whole range of local government services will be savage.

I want to consider the £250 million that the Government are throwing at the problem. We should have some information about how that money will be spent because that is the purpose of a money resolution. The provisional estimate is £250 million. Clause 3 provides powers for the Secretary of State to make regulations and establish the principles by which the valuation will be conducted.

The Government are clearly unprepared for this legislation. They are demanding in primary legislation that the principles that will apply should be included in subordinate legislation because they are not ready to be placed in primary legislation. It really is a topsy-turvey world when the Government introduce primary legislation and then say that the principles that they have not yet grasped or grappled with will be contained in subordinate legislation to be presented at some future date. Surely they have some notion of how that will be carried out.

Page 2 of the Bill shows that the number of public sector posts required to carry out the valuation is not known, because the Government are not certain how much of the valuation work will be contracted out to private sector professionals.

The Government say that the principles of their legislation have yet to be presented, and they tell the House that the amount to be spent is £250 million, but they do not know how much will be spent in the private sector and how much will be retained in the public sector. Will expenditure in the private sector be of the open cheque book variety for the chums of the Tory Government, or will expenditure be within the £250 million set out in the money resolution?

It is not unknown for the Government, having got a money resolution through the House, to have to come back two or three times after discovering that they do not have the authority for the expenditure. That is because they have treated the House with their usual arrogant contempt and have put through a money resolution which does not cover the whole of the expenditure. I invite the Minister to make it clear that the provisional estimate of £250 million will be adhered to and that the Government will not hand huge sums to the private sector.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) said, estate agents will have a vested interest in raising the amount of work that they do and the value that they place on houses. How will they maintain objectivity? Will payments to them be strictly compared with the rates for civil servants, or will they work on commission? Such issues are implied by the money resolution, and the House needs some answers.

Because of the dithering and confusion surrounding this legislation, the Government will soon have to come back to the House to ask for further authority for expenditure. I hope that that will not happen. The Opposition are protecting taxpayers against this lavish, spendthrift Government, who have already hurled £6 billion at this horrendously absurd poll tax in a vain attempt to rescue it.

The Government are asking for what they regard as a trivial amount, but £250 million is a very important item of expenditure. If it were applied to Bradford, it could solve some of its education problems. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh. There are 600 temporary classrooms in Bradford and about £40 million is needed to replace them with permanent extensions which are needed to cater for Bradford's expanding school rolls. No new houses are being built in Bradford, and there is a waiting list of several thousand. We need such money to put Bradford on an even keel, but in the past 10 years

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

hundreds of millions of pounds have been drawn away from local authorities, including Bradford, by the Government.

It is outrageous and unjust of the Government to take Government grant from local authorities, introduce wider charge-capping measures and then produce £250 million for an airy-fairy scheme whose principles the Government know nothing about.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I agree with everything that my hon. Friend says. He queried whether the Government would return to ask for more money. They always do. That has happened regularly over the years, when they have been looking for a bit of additional cash: they sneak it through in the early hours of the morning. It is people like my hon. Friend and myself, who are regular attenders, who have to put up with that kind of thing. When the Tories come to that Dispatch Box, they are really saying, "We've come for a bit more money for our friends."

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman responds, I ask him to bear in mind the fact that the money resolution deals with the valuation of domestic properties, and that he should confine his remarks to that subject.

Mr. Cryer: Absolutely, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would not dream of straying outside that subject. In fact, I have had quite a bit of practice at speaking on money resolutions. I find myself able to stay within the bounds of Standing Orders while at the same time pointing emphatically at the way in which the huge sum of money that is to be spent on valuation could be used for better purposes than to help the Government out of the financial mess in which they have got themselves over the poll tax.

I remember that on one occasion, the then Home Office Minister, the hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), was forced to return to the Dispatch Box two further times because the Government had made such a mess of their money resolutions.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): You have made your point.

Mr. Cryer: And it is not the only point I have scored against the Government. That is not difficult to do, given the mess into which they have got themselves in a large number of areas.

I hope that the Minister has some answers, and that he will not be coming back to the House. I want to restrict public expenditure on this kind of escapade. The valuations will create all kinds of problems, with the system of appeal and the move from one band to another. The notion that properties will remain in certain bands in perpetuity is quite ludicrous—as one Environment Minister has already suggested. We will need a much more complex system to meet all the problems that will arise.

A better solution would be to end the poll tax and to replace it with Labour's proposals. We have already told the Government that we will co-operate in the introduction of a fairer tax. Then public money can be spent in the areas in which it should be spent—education, housing, and social services—rather than on propping up a tottering edifice.

10.32 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): It was most amusing to hear the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) try to pose as some kind of friend of the taxpayer—a defender of the citizen. The Second Reading that preceded this debate was remarkable for the clarity with which Labour expressed its refusal to contemplate any capping or to defend the local taxpayer, and its determination, should it ever return to office, to let local authority spending rip.

It was remarkable also to hear the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) claim that the Government's council tax will in some way lead to higher bills per household than Labour's scheme, which the Opposition somewhat amusingly call "fair rates". Labour's figures are based on local authority spending this year—which has been brought extremely close to the Government's £39 billion target because we have been willing to cap, and have capped, and because the threat of capping persuaded many local authorities to adjust their budgets. It will not wash for the hon. Member for Dagenham, or for other members of the Opposition Front Bench, to claim to be the taxpayer's friend. They have spent much of the afternoon proving that they are not.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You pulled me up because I did not mention the question of valuation, but neither has the Minister. It would be fair if you pulled him up now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's assistance. I was becoming slightly worried when the Minister was talking about capping.

Mr. Portillo: I am sensitive enough to have been able to feel some of the vibes that were emanating from the Chair.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South said that the explanatory memorandum stated that the capital provisions have no significant effect on expenditure and spoke of the cost to local taxpayers. They are not costs but savings to local taxpayers. Derwentside, despite its small budget, has been levying a community charge £95 per head higher than the Government believe to be appropriate.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) castigated the Government for what he saw as an expensive and spendthrift proposal. I was surprised by his remarks. I remind the House that, in contrast to the £250 million proposed to allocate single properties to bands—the provisional estimate made in the explanatory memorandum, on which the money resolution is based—the Labour party proposes a return, in the short term, to the old rating list, a second change of system within 12 months and, following that, a valuation carried out not on a banding basis but on an exact valuation of all properties, which should be based on four different methods of valuation—rental, capital, rebuilding costs and repair and maintenance costs.

In addition, Labour proposes a new element to take into account ability to pay. In contrast to the £250 million that the money resolution proposes for a most simple valuation by allocating all properties to bands, the Labour party seeks to have two changes of system within a short period, and a valuation based on four different factors.

Mr. Blunkett: Perhaps the Minister would clarify the difference between clause 3 and the money resolution, the stated purpose of which is to provide the money for the valuation of all domestic properties.

Mr. Portillo: That was my next point. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is puzzled. All domestic properties in Britain must be allocated to a band. Therefore, they are being assigned a value—not an exact value, as the Labour party proposes, which would be an expensive process, as it would require a valuer to look at the details of every property—which will enable many properties to be valued without exact inspection.

Mr. Cryer: Whole streets?

Mr. Portillo: As the hon. Member for Bradford, South is saying, it may be possible to consider whole streets at a time and say that it is clear that all the properties in the street share certain characteristics. For that reason, the cost of valuation can be kept as reasonable as our provisional estimate of £250 million.

Mr. Cryer: The valuations may be made streets at a time, but surely the Minister is aware of the differences between houses in streets and roads. Corner houses are different and often have larger gardens, so does he not think that the Government's proposals will give rise to many problems? For example, an appeal system would be necessary so that people do not resent their houses being put in the same band, whatever the differences between them. This will create enormous problems.

Mr. Portillo: I am well aware that, within streets, there can be houses of different character. I am proposing only that a valuer might choose that approach where he is aware that all the houses in the street were basically of the same sort. I am not sure why the Labour party is being so obtuse about a banding system. I should have thought that it was an obvious way of proceeding which would commend itself to the Labour party, particularly as the Labour party now claims some interest in value for money.

The Government are interested in using the private sector to help in the valuation exercise because we believe that the private sector may be able to offer us value for money. Because that is the basis on which we would use the private sector, I am not able to say what proportion of the money will be spent with the private sector and what proportion will need to be spent with the public sector. I should want to use the private sector where it offers value for money. If I were to prejudge matters now, I should not be able to argue convincingly to the House that I was obtaining value for money.

The hon. Member for Brightside talked about the possible loss of revenue on the community charge over the next two years of its existence. Two points make me believe that the way ahead will be better than recent experience —the enforcement procedures are up and running and local authorities are being urged to pursue non-payers to the limit of their considerable powers, and the community charge has been reduced by £140, which means that, even in high-spending Labour authorities, it is now possible for many more people to pay the community charge without difficulty.

If the hon. Member for Brightside is really concerned about the workability of the community charge over the next two years, it still lies in his hands and in the hands of his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench to say unequivocally that they expect everyone to pay the community charge, including Labour Members of Parliament and Labour councillors. Until that is said loudly and clearly, the House will have little sympathy.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman may make the statement again. Once he has made it, he can also explain why, despite that, there are still Labour Members and Labour councillors who advocate non-payment.

Mr. Blunkett: I shall deliberately and calculatingly rise to the bait. So that we do not have to go through all this in the Committee of the whole House, may I say unequivocally that we have made it clear on innumerable occasions to every Labour party member and elected representative that we expect them to pay the poll tax. We have made that clear in our resolutions and in our conference statements.

We do not yet, however, live in a totalitarian society —*[Interruption.]* We in the Labour party do not, which is why I do not have the power—nor should anyone else—to compel individuals to do something. The Government should not have the power; nor should I. We should have the ability to persuade and encourage, and to ensure that people understand our policies. I hope that the Minister accepts that that is a clear statement of what we stand for and where we are at. If we could say the same for Conservative Members and their friends about the manipulation of methods of ensuring that everything that should be paid was paid, we would all be much better off. Last year, the National Audit Office showed that £5 billion of national taxation was going missing. It is time that the Government did something about that.

Mr. Portillo: When I next have the pleasure of meeting Joan Twelves, I shall discuss the Labour party's lack of totalitarianism—*[Interruption.]* She has also been thrown out of the Labour party.

I am happy to commend the money resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of such sums as may be required to enable a valuation to be carried out, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, of all domestic properties in Great Britain, including sums required—

(a) to enable the Secretary of State to make grants to regional or islands councils towards their expenditure for the purposes of, or otherwise in connection with, the valuation; and

(b) to meet administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in making any such grants.

European Community Documents

10.43 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before deciding on the European Community document on tobacco products, I seek your advice.

One of the great constitutional problems with which we are faced is the acquisition of powers by stealth by European Community institutions. The House, in agreeing to the Single European Act 1985, agreed on the establishment and functioning of the internal market of the European Community. Powers were given to the European Community to decide various issues by a qualified majority. The document that we are about to decide deals with the internal market with reference to the labelling of tobacco products. It is sensible to argue that, if a tobacco product can move from one part of the internal market to another, the labelling should be the same throughout. We have given such powers to the European Community by a qualified majority vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but we cannot debate the matter now. I am not clear what point of order there is for the Chair.

Mr. Marlow: I have no desire or intention to debate the issue now. I am saying that certain powers have been given with regard to the labelling of tobacco products. The document also contains a power to ban a certain product—oral snuff. Another document, by a qualified majority vote, could ban the sale of alcohol. This is nothing to do with trade between countries in the Community or with the internal market; it is to do with stopping the people of this country doing something in this country. The House has not given such powers to the European Community.

The Government's view is that, if the matter were taken to the European Court, the issue might be defeated. We know that the European Court is a political court. The Government have decided not to pursue the issue, but the powers of the House are being removed from the House. It is no good voting against a take-note motion. I ask for your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about what the House can do to retrieve its original powers which it never intended to give to the European Community institutions but which are now daily being acquired by stealth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not possible to pursue the matter now. As I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises, I am bound by Standing Order No. 102(9) to put the Question forthwith.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

Labelling of Tobacco Products

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10146/90 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Health on 8th May 1991, relating to labelling of tobacco products; recognises that the proposal would require the United Kingdom to extend legislative controls on tobacco products' labelling and to ban oral snuff products, endorses the Government's view that it is important to prevent the use of oral snuff from becoming established in the United Kingdom and the European Community and that it is desirable that the users of all tobacco products should be warned about the health risks; and supports the Government's view that the proposal is acceptable to the United Kingdom.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

Protection of Habitats of Wild Flora and Fauna

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8149/88, 9204/89, 5807/90 and 4684/91 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 10th May 1991, on the protection of habitats and wild flora and fauna; and supports the Government's intention to press urgently for an approach which would provide satisfactory protection throughout the Community for species and habitats which are endangered or vulnerable at the European level.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Guardsmen Povey, Hicks and Ray (Compensation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.47 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I wish tonight to raise the case of a constituent of mine, Sean Povey, who, with two other Grenadier guardsmen, lost his legs during a training exercise in Canada. The tragic accident happened on 7 July 1989 while the soldiers were digging a trench as part of a training exercise. A buried shell exploded and all three—Sean Povey, Adrian Hicks and John Ray—had to have their legs amputated. They also suffered other injuries.

That is the background to the debate that I have initiated tonight. My constituent, Sean Povey, was only 19 at the time, and the others were also young. I understand that one of them—not my constituent—has already been discharged from the Army. All three received lengthy hospital treatment, and Sean remains in a military hospital for most of the time. In all, he has undergone five operations and he may have to undergo another in the near future. At 19, this young lad lost his legs while carrying out instructions in a training exercise. Clearly —and I hope that the Minister will confirm this—no blame can be attached to him or to the other two.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Winnick: I see the Minister nodding. They are entirely innocent of what occurred in the training exercise in Canada in July 1989.

The debate arises because of the Ministry of Defence's continuing refusal to pay compensation to the three soldiers. That refusal is on the basis that what occurred was not the fault of the Ministry. The Minister has confirmed—and he will no doubt do so again later—that no blame attaches to the three soldiers. However, it has also been said that no blame attaches to the Ministry. There is therefore to be no compensation.

However, the soldiers and their families were initially told, after the accident, that compensation would be paid. I was told in a reply that I received from the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces in the other place that, having received the advice of the Treasury Solicitor and counsel that the Ministry was not legally responsible for the injuries, it was decided not to pay any compensation. It seems that the Ministry is hiding behind a legal briefing. It has been told that it has no legal responsibility, and Ministers have decided simply to accept that decision. I find that totally unsatisfactory, as do many other Conservative and Opposition Members. More than 200 hon. Members have signed an early-day motion tabled by the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) which calls for the Government to pay generous compensation and calls for the return of the accumulated legal costs to the three guardsmen.

The regiment has done its best, but the decision lies with the Ministry which, so far, has refused to relent in the case. Representations by solicitors have been made on behalf of the three soldiers. Hon. Members, including myself, have written, but the response has been totally negative in terms of compensation. There has been no willingness by the Ministry for the board of inquiry into the case to be reopened. I believe that there is a case for that to be done, and I shall be interested to hear the Minister's response.

The Minister will no doubt refer tonight to the fact that, if my constituent, Sean Povey, is duly discharged from the Army, a service pension will be paid to him. That is right. But a pension cannot be a substitute for extra compensation after losing both legs at the age of 19, when no fault lies with him or with the other two soldiers.

I do not know whether the Minister is aware that the Member of Parliament of one of the soldiers, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, is sitting beside him. The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) has asked me whether he can intervene, and I hope that he will be able to do so shortly. They know, as I do, that all three men are bitterly disappointed by the attitude of the Ministry of Defence. Who can blame them?

It will not be easy for the three men in civilian life. The only job that they have known has been the Army. They joined the Army straight after school. Although without legs and crippled for life, they will seek work in a highly competitive marketplace. Even if we were not in such a serious recession, they would be up against competition from others who may have learnt a trade after leaving school. All the experience of the three men has been in the Army. Have they not suffered enough already without being put through additional mental stress and difficulties if the case has to go to court?

I received a letter from a teacher at a school in my constituency, part of which I should like to quote. The teacher writes:

> "I have known Sean for a number of years in my capacity as a subject teacher and Head of Sixth Form at St. Thomas More School in Willenhall.
>
> For several years Sean had made it plain that the only career he wished to follow was in the army. When he was accepted for training"—

I hope that the Minister is listening—

> "Sean was absolutely delighted and I remember how proud he was when he visited the school in his uniform after passing out.
>
> It seems a great tragedy to me when a young man whose only desire in life was to defend his country is now being so shabbily treated by the Ministry of Defence."

I do not expect that the Minister will relent tonight. The Minister has his brief—I do not wish to personalise the point—and he will explain, unfortunately, that the Ministry has not changed its view. He will be full of sympathy. Indeed, the letter that I received was full of sympathy for the three young men, and I do not question that. He will refer to the pension that will be paid through the Department of Social Security if the soldiers are discharged, as I am sure that the other two soldiers will be, because of their serious injuries.

This case will not go away. This Adjournment debate is part of a continuing campaign for justice to be done to the three soldiers. I was told in the reply that I received from the Minstry of Defence that it did not intend that my constituent or the other two soldiers would be abandoned. But Sean Povey, Adrian Hicks and John Ray feel, to a large extent, that they have been abandoned by the Ministry of Defence. I know that the Royal British Legion has written to several hon. Members urging them to support the campaign for compensation to be paid.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winnick: If I can conclude, the hon. Gentleman may have time to make his remarks.

A construction worker who lost both legs in the channel tunnel work, also in July 1989, took his case to court and was awarded in the High Court £370,173 agreed damages. That accident took place in the same month and the same year. That person, who was aged 40, also lost both legs. I ask the Minister and the Secretary of State to realise how essential it is that the three soldiers, who lost their legs through no fault of their own and have been crippled for life, should receive justice. If sufficient hon. Members on both sides of the House are determined that justice should be done, in the end it will be done; but I hope that it will be done in the very near future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Do I understand that the hon. Members who are rising have the agreement of both the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and the Minister? I see that they have.

10.56 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), for allowing me to speak in the debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall, North on initiating it. As they both know, Lance Corporal John Ray is one of my constituents. This poor young man had both his legs blown off in the accident in Canada.

What makes me particularly angry about what happened is that I believe that John Ray, Guardsman Hicks and Guardsman Povey are being impeded in their search for justice by what I can only call secrecy within the Ministry of Defence. I understand, as any sensible person understands, that there is a necessity in the MOD for keeping most things, or at least many things, secret. But there are certain matters into which secrecy should not intrude. In certain matters, honesty, common sense and compassion should rule the day. This matter is undoubtedly one of them.

In these few moments, I seek certain undertakings. The first is that the full memorandum of understanding between the Canadian and United Kingdom Governments and any amendments that have been made since 1979 are released to the legal representatives of the three guardsmen. Secondly, the full board of inquiry report should be released, possibly without restricted details such as the composition and technical details of a 76 mm Hesch round. Thirdly, the range orders that existed in 1984-85 when the blind was supposedly fired, plus the range orders in existence on 7 July 1989 when the three young men were so severely injured, should be given to the legal representatives who have a duty and a right properly to represent our constituents.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to answer some questions. First, were the young men properly warned of the dangers of buried unexploded munitions? If not, why not? If they were, what precautions were taken, and why did they not work? Does it make any difference to the legal case whether the 76 mm Hesch blind was fired from a Canadian gun or a British one?

There is no doubt about the fact that the careers and lives of those three young men have been blighted. In industrial accidents of a similar nature, prompt and effective compensation is paid. We know that military training is often hazardous, and undertandably so, but while maintaining the efficacy of military training it is also the duty of those in authority to ensure that they reduce such hazards to the minimum. When that duty fails, there is also a duty on those in authority to look after those who are, unhappily, so damagingly injured.

I am by no means satisfied that the Ministry of Defence is doing its duty by those who decided to serve us by doing theirs.

11 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I thank the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) for giving me the opportunity to speak. I also congratulate the hon. Gentleman on winning the ballot and instigating this important debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) asked several questions to which I shall be very interested to hear the answers. I believe that it will be difficult for the Minister to answer those questions, because the board of inquiry was totally inadequate: it failed to give those guardsmen any chance of proving negligence on behalf of the British Government under the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987. Basically, it made no attempt to look at the causes of the accident. The board looked at how to stop such an accident in the future rather than at the cause. Those guardsmen must prove negligence in terms of that accident. To do so they must have access to information.

Why was the blind shell uncleared? What were the contractual arrangments between the United Kingdom Government and the Canadian Government? What were the range orders at the time? Most important, what was the briefing given to those guardsmen when they were ordered into the impact area of a live firing range to dig trenches? Surely important briefings were given to those guardsmen at that time. If they were not given a proper briefing, that is the type of thing that would amount to negligence. Proof of negligence is the only chance open to those guardsmen to receive anything other than a mere pittance, for the sum given is a pittance relative to payments for a similar injury suffered in the private sector. The hon. Member for Walsall, North was correct to mention the compensation of £300,000 that was given for a commensurate civilian injury.

The board of inquiry must be reopened in the interests of giving an opportunity of justice to the three guardsmen. As has been said, they were doing nothing except their duty, as commanded by Her Majesty's Government.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to agree to recommend to the Government that the board of inquiry be reopened forthwith.

11.3 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on obtaining the Adjournment debate. He has raised a moving and tragic case that has received much publicity outside the House and has attracted the interest of many hon. Members.

Guardsman Povey was involved in an appalling accident, and it is deeply saddening that his career—and that of the other two soldiers involved in the incident—

should have been curtailed so tragically. I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to explain to the House the background which gave rise to this incident, together with the benefits available and the circumstances in which other compensation payments may be made. It will be clear to the House that there is no intention of abandoning this soldier—or, indeed, any other service man injured in the line of duty, whether as a result of armed conflict or not.

May I express my personal gratitude to the Royal British Legion and the British Limbless Ex-servicemen's Association for their role in supporting those men, and pay tribute to the men themselves for the magnificent way in which they are coming to terms with their disabilities. All three were offered a skiing holiday in Germany last year by BLESMA, and two were able to go. I also understand that, depending on his resettlement plans, Guardsman Povey is to attend a course in Scotland later this year, encompassing sailing, riding and shooting. Furthermore, earlier this year, the British Legion took the men to the Sunshine Games for the disabled in Florida, where I believe they performed very creditably. All that demonstrates the greatest determination and courage on the part of those men.

The House will wish to know that Guardsman Povey remains in service, still receiving medical care, and, that therefore no decisions have yet been taken on when he will be medically discharged. That decision will be taken only when his treatment has been completed. Lance Corporal Ray is to be discharged later this year, and, as many hon. Members will know, Mr. Hicks was discharged at the end of last year.

As we have heard, Guardsman Povey was injured in an accident in July 1989, during a training exercise at the Suffield training area in Canada. He was engaged—together with the other two soldiers—in digging a trench for a Milan anti-tank weapons system. Having removed the turf, they went on to remove the topsoil below in preparation for a mechanical digger, when one of them struck a buried munition which exploded. Medical assistance was called for immediately, and all three soldiers were taken to Medicine Hat hospital. The munition was subsequently identified as having been fired on the Suffield training area some time in 1984-85. A board of inquiry was held into the accident and a summary—including the conclusion—has been released to one firm of solicitors, and would be released on request to any other firm, representing the three men.

I should say to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) that it is not normal Ministry of Defence practice to issue the whole report of a board of inquiry, because that would affect the evidence given to that board of inquiry. However, I am convinced that the summary contains all the component parts of the report.

Mr. Sayeed: I have read the summary, which uses the term "adequately briefed". That is the crux of the problem. What does "adequately briefed" mean? Until the guardsmen and their legal representatives know, they will not know whether they have a case for compensation.

Mr. Hamilton: I am not sure that the full report would spell out the meaning of "adequately briefed". I should have thought that the report covered the whole question of the guardsmen's briefing, but I do not know whether it is possible to add to it.

Mr. Winnick: The soldiers were not responsible?

Mr. Hamilton: Investigations concluded that the fuse on the munition had not functioned when it was fired, so that a so-called "blind" was left buried approximately 8-10 in below the ground. As the round had been in the ground for up to five years, its detonator could have become very sensitive.

I must emphasise that there is no question of any of the soldiers being at fault or, indeed—I shall come back to this point—of blame attaching to anyone. The incident was thoroughly investigated and the conclusion reached by the inquiry was that it was a tragic accident for which no one could be blamed. No one could be reasonably expected to know that there was a buried munition at the spot where the trench was being dug. There is a well established procedure for reporting and disposing of these "blinds" by range safety and ammunition technical staff. The procedure is comprehensive and is assiduously applied, but we must recognise that, however comprehensive the safety procedure, there may be isolated instances, as in this case, where the munition was buried and its existence unknown to exercising troops and safety staff.

On the question of compensation, I can confirm that claims have been made on behalf of all three soldiers by two leading firms of solicitors. It may be helpful at this stage if I gave some background to claims against Government Departments.

The House will recollect very well the lengthy debates that arose out of the decision in 1986 to repeal section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act. This had the effect, from the date of the repeal, of putting service personnel in exactly the same position as all other groups of employees as regards their legal right to seek compensation from their employers for injuries received in the course of their work. That is exactly the position that Guardsman Povey and the other two soldiers are now in. They have the right to take proceedings against the Ministry of Defence.

Let me clarify why it is that the Ministry of Defence should deal with these claims even though the accident took place in Canada on Canadian Government property —this answers one of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed). As part of the agreement with the Canadians for the use of the Suffield range by the British Army, the MOD has agreed to indemnify the Canadians against all claims for compensation, actions and suits made as a result of British use of the range. That is the usual practice for forces operating on foreign soil. Much has been made, in the press and elsewhere, of the ownership of the particular munition involved—ownership is irrelevant. If there had been any negligence or fault established in this incident, the MOD would have accepted liability on behalf of those responsible.

I have to say clearly that, if there was any degree of fault or negligence on the part of the Ministry, or anyone acting on its behalf, liability would not be in question. If it had been considered that, on the balance of probabilities, a court of law would have found negligence, we would have sought the advice of our lawyers on how much the court would have awarded in damages, and that sum would have been offered to the service men.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East raised the issue of the release of the memorandum of understanding. As far as I know, there is no such memorandum. I suspect that there is an exchange of letters that covers the point

[Mr. Hamilton]

about indemnifying the Canadians against claims for compensation. My hon. Friend also asked whether the range orders could be released, and I can assure him that that can be done. I shall organise that.

I acknowledge that, in cases such as Guardsman Povey's, there can be an instinctive reaction to ignore the legal issues and say that the case is so deserving of compassion that we should pay compensation irrespective of our liability. But how could we distinguish the case from previous ones, or perhaps others to come, without creating anomalies and injustices? A line has to be drawn, and the fairest way is on the basis of our legal liability. Decisions on other grounds could only be a matter for arbitrary judgment.

Mr. John Browne: My hon. Friend is talking about the legal liabilities of the British Government. Is he absolutely satisfied that the exchange of letters and the full briefings given to the guardsmen have been released to their solicitors, so that their legal representatives stand a chance of proving negligence on behalf of Her Majesty's Government? Without that chance, the guardsmen will not receive any compensation under present legislation.

Mr. Hamilton: As I said, the issue of the briefings given to the soldiers was covered under the summary of the report and the inquiry. From then on, it is a question of legal judgment as to whether negligence can be proved against the Ministry of Defence. The advice that I am being given is that that cannot be done.

As I have said, the accident was thoroughly investigated, and it has been concluded that no improvement in procedures could have guaranteed that this tragic accident would not have happened. However, that is not the end of the matter. Lest there be any doubt about this, let me assure the House that Guardsman Povey will remain a member of the armed forces on full pay until he is medically fit to be discharged, and before he is discharged he will receive a full programme of resettlement advice and counselling interviews.

However, there remains the question of what benefits and awards are available to soldiers, such as Guardsman Povey, injured in the line of duty, but where no fault attaches to the MOD or anyone for whom it is responsible. May I first of all remind the House of the provision which is made through established pension schemes, particularly for service personnel who are medically discharged on account of injury or ill health which is attributable to their service. As hon. Members are, I am quite sure, aware, there are two such schemes. One is the war pension scheme, which is administered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and about which I shall say something shortly. The other is the armed forces' own occupational pension scheme, which is administered by the Ministry of Defence.

The armed forces scheme provides a pension, and a lump sum, for any service man who is invalided, regardless of whether the cause is attributable to service or not, as long as he has given at least two years qualifying service. But where the cause is attributable to service—there is no doubt of this in the circumstances of the incident being debated—the benefits are significantly greater, and there is no minimum qualifying period of service. In practice, the trigger for converting to an attributable pension is the award of a war pension by the DSS. I shall return to this in a moment.

Benefits of the armed forces scheme include an additional lump sum, and a pension which is assessed according to the degree of disability. Where the degree of disability is assessed at 100 per cent. the guaranteed minimum pension is calculated to provide an income, when taken together with the standard rate of war disability pension paid by the Department of Social Security, which is about two thirds of the military salary appropriate to the man's rank.

The war pension scheme, administered, as I said earlier, by the Department of Social Security, provides tax-free benefits for people injured or disabled as a result of service in the armed forces. It also provides pensions for the widow or other dependants of someone who dies as a result of service.

Let me give an example of what these benefits and pension awards could mean to a young soldier—a private—with something like three years' service and earning a base salary of about £8,700, and invalided from the service. First, his normal service invaliding pension would amount to a little less than £500 a year and his tax-free terminal grant would be a little less than £1,500. The Department of Social Security would then assess his degree of disability. At 100 per cent., a war pension would be £84·90 a week. In addition, the further pensions payable would amount to £7,200 a year tax-free, index-linked to take account of inflation, and payable for life.

Mr. John Browne: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hamilton: No, I am about to finish.

He would also receive tax-free lump sum payment of about £6,500. The capitalised sum necessary to fund this range of pension awards and benefits has been actuarially assessed as in the order of £150,000. Also, these figures should be compared not to cases where compensation has been paid as a result of negligence, but to the kind of provision an employer might make for his employees injured in the course of their work where no element of negligence is involved.

Moreover, these benefits do not represent the entire picture. An ex-service man, even though awarded a 100 per cent. disability pension, may be able to find employment as the hon. Member for Walsall, North acknowledged. Any earnings he receives would of course be in addition to his combined pensions and subject to the usual tax allowances. On the other hand, if his disability made him unemployable, he would be entitled to receive additional payments under the war pension scheme, such as unemployability supplement and invalidity allowance.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seventeen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 4 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Oil Fires, Kuwait

2. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the medical qualifications of those responsible for monitoring the health of sappers engaged in support of those fighting oil fires in Kuwait; how many doctors are engaged in this work; how frequently checks of the lungs are conducted; what conclusions have been drawn from the appearance of black spots on dissected sheep; what expertise is available on the consequences of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and hydrogen sulphide in the atmosphere; and what plans he has for rotational use of sappers.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): There are six doctors and 46 medical support personnel with our forces in Kuwait. In addition, a military public health physician is regularly monitoring the lung function of service personnel in the area of the oil fires and expert advice has been sought on atmospheric pollutants. There are no plans for the roulement of Royal Engineers in Kuwait. I have no information about black spots on dissected sheep.

Mr. Dalyell: In that case, the Minister should have such information. In view of expert medical opinion on the findings on sheep's lungs, what do we suppose is happening to human lungs? Is not it the truth that military personnel and civilians are at dire risk on account of aromatic hydrocarbons, of getting cancer over 10 years?

Mr. Hamilton: I am told that the most likely cause of the black spots is soot and that they are, therefore, similar to the black spots to be found on the lungs of coal miners or of people living in London at the time of smog. The hon. Gentleman referred to the carcinogenic effects of the air that is being inhaled in Kuwait. The effects are basically thought to be long term rather than short term and, in the short term, are not reckoned to be any worse on our people in Kuwait than are the effects of smoking 20 cigarettes a day or of suffering from passive smoking.

Mr. Adley: Nevertheless, is my hon. Friend aware that increasing numbers of people, including many diplomats in the Gulf, have the impression that the American company Bechtel is somehow preventing British companies and other European companies from tackling the fires in Kuwait far more effectively? Although I recognise my hon. Friend's ministerial responsibility, will he at least have a word with colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry to see whether the problem can be tackled? For the sake of all of us, the fires must be put out as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hamilton: I can assure my hon. Friend that a tremendous amount of work has been done to ensure that British firms play a big role in the reconstruction of Kuwait. A number of British firms are now involved in putting out fires.

Helicopters

3. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement about the replacement of the Royal Air Force SAR Wessex helicopters.

5. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department last placed an order for Sea King helicopters.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): We last placed an order for Sea King helicopters in November 1987. All seven aircraft ordered have now been delivered.

As I advised my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 10 May, we are examining the case for the Wessex's replacement as part of the normal equipment planning process of the Ministry of Defence. An announcement will be made once a decision has been taken.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that an early decision is now required in view of the fact that the Wessex helicopter is operationally inferior to, for example, the Sea King? Indeed, some of the Wessex fleet is approaching 30 years old. In addition to that, can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government have ruled out the possibility of the sole use of a civilian contractor to provide that service?

Mr. Clark: I should very much like to dispose of a budget that would allow me to comply with all my hon. Friends' requests about defence equipment procurement. As my hon. Friend knows well, we are under constraints at present and all these matters must be considered carefully. No decision on the civilian operation of the search and rescue service will be made until the options exercise has been completed. I can assure my hon. Friend that we will always take the wartime requirement fully into account in retaining a core capability.

Mr. Speller: May I take my right hon. Friend on a slightly different tack? Summer is with us. The Wessex helicopter, although excellent in the past, is no longer the all-weather, all-year-round or all-radar-equipped aircraft that we need along the Bristol channel and the north Devon coast. I beg my right hon. Friend to consider the matter for two purposes: the first is the safety of our tourists and the second is, perhaps, the continuance of a British-built helicopter fleet for the future. My right hon. Friend must make his mind up and make a change fairly soon.

Mr. Clark: I take my hon. Friend's point. The Sea King is more capable, and, with its night flying capability, operating from RAF Brawdy, it will provide cover for the Bristol channel.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: As the Minister clearly understands, the replacement of the Wessex with the Sea King is intimately bound up with the contractorisation of search and rescue. Does he understand the dismay, both within the Royal Air Force and outside it, that contractorisation is once again under consideration? What has changed in the three years since contractorisation was successfully defeated by a campaign both inside and outside the House? Why will not the Minister reaffirm the Government's commitment to the RAF and the Royal Navy by rejecting contractorisation outright now?

Mr. Clark: The commitment in sea-air rescue is to those at risk. I am entirely confident that, however future arrangements may differ from existing arrangements, the risk to seafarers will not be aggravated. We shall continue to meet the criteria laid down by the Department of Transport. As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North a core capability to deal with the wartime requirement will always be retained.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister recall that before both the 1983 and the 1987 general elections the Tory Government lambasted the Opposition, saying that Labour would cut defence spending if ever the Labour party got into power? Now the Tory Government cannot even satisfy their own Back Benchers. As somebody else said recently, this is a "funny old world".

Mr. Clark: I am interested by the hon. Gentleman's new-found interest in sea-air rescue helicopters. I can tell him that, whatever contraction may take place as part of the restructuring of our defences, it will be as nothing compared with what would happen if the Labour party got its hands on defence. If the hon. Gentleman is honest, he will admit that many studies are flying round on how the Labour party can plunder the defence budget to pay for its glib strings of promises.

Mr. Barry Field: When my right hon. Friend considers bids for the replacement of search and rescue helicopters, will he bear it in mind that an order with Westland would bring work to Westland Aerospace at West Cowes in my constituency? Westland Aerospace has an enviable international reputation for composite technology and for exporting aerospace technology from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend's point is well taken. Certainly that is one consideration that we keep to the forefront of our mind when considering the placing of a successor order.

Mr. Rogers: As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, it is a "funny old world". None the less, we are pleased that the Minister has reaffirmed that he will defer an announcement on helicopters until after he has made a decision. Some time ago, in answer to a question on the cancellation of Tornados, the Minister replied that the job losses incurred were not his responsibility, nor that of the Government. Since then about 75,000 jobs have been lost in the defence industry. Does not the Minister understand that his procrastination and dithering over the orders for helicopters will now cost thousands of jobs in Tory constituencies and that that will cost the Tories seats at the next election?

Mr. Clark: I fully sympathise with the hon. Gentleman who had a carefully prepared supplementary to the question tabled by his hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), but was forced to attach it instead to a question about helicopters. As you, Mr. Speaker, judge his question to be in order, I am glad to face it. As I said to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), if Labour Members were honest, they would admit that the present scale of redundancies and job losses in the defence industry are as nothing compared with what we would suffer if the Labour party ever got its hands on the defence budget and plundered it to pay for all their promises of expenditure in every other area.

Trident

4. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the safety of the Trident nuclear missile system.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): The Government are satisfied with the safety of the Trident nuclear missile system. The missile and its nuclear warhead will undergo a comprehensive series of trials, independent assessments and safety checks before it enters service with the Royal Navy.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Secretary of State agree that on both the construction and weaponry sides of the project, Trident is turning into an extremely dangerous and expensive white elephant? Will he confirm a report in the *Glasgow Herald* that the Trident project has been subject to an external audit commissioned by his Department because of the extreme anxiety that the project is in chaos on many fronts?

Will the Secretary of State give us his views on the Drell panel report from the United States which singled out the Trident warhead as a particular source of anxiety? The committee was set up by the United States House of Representatives, which found that there was no fireproof screen between the nuclear warheads and the weapon fuel. On the latter point, will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that before there is any question of Trident being brought into use in Britain, there will be an independent assessment of all the safety elements? Why do we have to receive such information from the United States, rather than from our own Government?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman covered two entirely separate points in his question. In response to the second one, I have made clear our confidence in the safety aspects of the system. I can confirm again that we attach the highest importance, for the most obvious reasons, as successive Governments have done, to ensuring at all times scrupulous attention to safety in the operation and handling of our nuclear deterrent.

The first matter that the hon. Gentleman raised was about the construction projects that are in operation, especially at Faslane. Considerable progress has been made. They are major projects. Again, scrupulous attention to ensuring the highest standards of safety has meant reconsideration of certain issues. Those issues have been carefully examined. However, we would not describe the projects in the extravagant language that the hon. Gentleman used when he said that they were a shambles. The construction that is taking place at Faslane is a remarkable achievement.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sniping at Trident by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) shows the true face of the Labour party at work and that the Labour party still stands for one-sided disarmament which would put the defence of Britain very much at risk?

Mr. King: The whole House realised by the very length of the question asked by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that he was searching for every possible way of attacking the nuclear deterrent. That is obviously contrary to the policy which we have officially been told is now espoused by the Opposition Front Bench team and the Leader of the Opposition. I agree with my hon. Friend that the question by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North is much more indicative of the true voice of the Labour party.

Mr. Boyes: May I make it absolutely clear to the Secretary of State for Defence that the Trident programme is an integral and important part of Labour party defence policy. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Further to the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), according to the Drell report, the United States navy has been granted permission to use insensitive high explosives and the most volatile propellant, and to position warheads around the third rocket motors. That will enable maximum range warhead yield and increase the number of warheads, thereby dramatically reducing safety. Why will not the Secretary of State agree with my hon. Friend and Opposition Front-Bench Members that it is necessary to set up an independent inquiry, as the United States did, and report in public? Why will he not have that independent inquiry?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman had been studying matters carefully, he would have noticed that the Drell report commented favourably on the safety review arrangements that operate in Britain and recommended the introduction of similar arrangements in the United States. I make it clear that we attach the highest importance to safety. We shall take any steps that we think appropriate to ensure that safety is assessed and, if necessary, reviewed independently to an extent sufficient to create public confidence.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) said in his introductory comment that Trident was an integral and important part of the Labour defence programme. I did not hear echoes round the Floor of the House of agreement with that amazing new policy statement. It is all very well to try to cover up Labour embarrassment on nuclear policy, but to go over the top to the extent that the hon. Gentleman did can lead only to the deep unhappiness that I see reflected in one or two faces on the Opposition Benches.

Arms Trade

6. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent policy changes he has made regarding the assistance given by his Department to enable arms manufacturers to participate in the international arms trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. Canavan: As the unchecked international arms trade, which includes a contribution from Britain, has created monsters such as Saddam Hussein, who caused the Gulf war that killed more than 100,000 people, how can the Government possibily justify allowing a butcher such as General Pinochet to come to this country to arrange a British-Chilean arms contract? He was responsible for killing and torturing thousands of people. That contract means that British arms technology will be freely available worldwide, even to countries such as Iraq.

Mr. Clark: It is untrue to say that the arms trade is unchecked. The hon. Gentleman and the House will be aware that it is subject to careful checks and scrutiny through our export licence procedure and a careful scrutiny of all applicants, deals and contracts. The visit of General Pinochet was nothing to do with the Government. He did not come as an official visitor; he came to look at a British commercial concern in which he has an interest. There was no question of the Government's having any power to exclude him.

Challenger Tank

7. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will make a decision about the Challenger tank order.

Mr. Alan Clark: As hon. Members will know, a wide range of factors must be taken into account in reaching a decision as important as that on the equipment of the future main battle tank fleet. I recognise the concern of the House that that decision should not be delayed unnecessarily. Although I cannot be drawn into a discussion of detail at this stage, I can say that it is our intention to make a further announcement before the end of this month.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister confirm that his military advisers have already recommended to the Government that they should take the German Leopard tank on a leasing arrangement? Will he put an end to the charade of stringing along the Vickers company in Leeds, its work force and his Back-Bench colleagues with promises of decisions tomorrow?

Mr. Clark: I stand by what I just said—a further announcement will be made this month. I do not know what the hon. Gentleman means by our military advisers—there is no such body. We take opinion from a variety of different people.

Mr. Batiste: Is it not clear from the Gulf war that the Challenger tank is the best tank available in the world? It would be a charade were the British Army to have any other equipment. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the current quotations from the four contenders for the Chieftain replacement contract will expire towards the end of this month and that his announcement will precede that date?

Mr. Clark: Yes, I certainly can and that is why I told the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) that an announcement will be made before the end of this month.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Dithering is rapidly becoming a hallmark of this Government. Why can the Minister not stand at the Dispatch Box and say that the Government will buy British?

Mr. Clark: As I told the House, this is an extremely important decision and a range of different factors must be taken into account. It is one of the most fundamental decisions on re-equipping the Army and we must consider all the relevant factors before we reach that decision. A further announcement is not far away and, if the hon. Gentleman remains patient, he will hear something in due course.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend accept that he would need to have the tongue of a Cicero to convince even his own hon. Friends to buy the German Leopard tank or any other foreign tank for the British armed forces? Let us stop procrastinating. Let us say today that there will be one tank for the British armed forces and it will be Challenger. Why not say that now? Why must we wait?

Mr. Clark: I welcome what my hon. Friend says—*[Interruption.]*—and I welcome the mood that I seem to be sensing from hon. Members on both sides. I certainly agree that nobody could possibly relish the task of explaining to the House that we were to buy a German tank.

Manpower Levels

8. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the future role of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers within the defence requirements of the United Kingdom.

13. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposed manpower levels for NATO.

Mr. Tom King: Last week's meeting of NATO Defence Ministers agreed a new role for the United Kingdom, to assign forces to and lead the new multinational rapid reaction corps. In accordance with my "Options for Change" statement last July, and under this new strategy agreed by NATO, we shall move to an Army of 116,000 by the mid-1990s. On that basis, consultation within the Army on the future structure of regiments and corps will now proceed. Although the reduction in the size of the Army will inevitably involve changes for many units, whether amalgamation or in some cases, possibly, disbandment, I can confirm that the basis of the consultation will be that the regimental system will be kept.

Mr. Garrett: The Secretary of State will be pleased to hear that his last remarks give me some reassurance. I recall the events of 1968, the defence review and the tragic decision to curtail the traditions of some of the most famous regiments in the British Army. Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is still possible to keep those traditions, even at the one battalion level? The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, which has three regular battalions, could perhaps have two battalions——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Garrett: I will do my best. Perhaps the first battalion could have in brackets after that title. "Northumberland"; the second, "Lancashire"; and, if there were a third, it could be called, "Royal Fusiliers".

Mr. King: The matter is for consultation within the Army, as I said, and I shall report back to the House as soon as I can on the decisions that are reached. I echo what the hon. Gentleman said and appreciate his recognition of the situation. Like every other major country, there is scope for a reduction in the scale of our armed forces. It can be done sensitively and intelligently, remembering and recognising the advantage and tremendous benefits that flow from the deep traditions of the regimental system that mean so much to so many of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Wiggin: In view of my right hon. Friend's important announcement about the reduction in the Regular Army, will he recognise the increased importance of the Territorial Army and resist the blandishments of the generals to reduce either its numbers or resources, since the reserves are even more important when our regulars are fewer in number?

Mr. King: I appreciate why my hon. Friend, with his knowledge of the subject, raises that point. We shall be addressing—indeed, we are considering—the position of the Territorial Army. As I made it clear in my original statement on "Options for Change", I value the contribution made by our volunteer reserve forces and am anxious to see the right basis on which the appropriate need, retention and recruitment can be addressed so that the forces continue to play and, in some respects, play an enhanced role in the defence of our country.

Mr. Dunn: Is not the leadership of British forces in the rapid reaction corps a tremendous complement to our forces and a major step forward in the provision and supply of a self-sufficient modern military force?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and very much agree with what he said. He will know that the Army welcomes the new role that has been identified for United Kingdom forces within NATO. The leadership and the majority of the members of the Rapid Reaction Corps will give it a significant and important role for the future, which will be appropriate to our high-standard professional army.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Rapid Reaction Corps will not only be good news for Britain, because, as the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Dartford, (Mr. Dunn) said, it will be British led and dominated, but will be welcomed within our alliance and not unwelcome in eastern Europe? When does he expect to make a statement on the financial arrangements for the new corps?

Mr. King: On the general set-up, I hope to publish a defence White Paper before the summer recess to bring together the developments taking place in the defence area. I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman, with his knowledge of the subject, says. The hon. Gentleman will excuse me if I do not use the word "dominated" in relation to that multi-national corps as it will include elements from a number of other countries, which will be very welcome in that new, more flexible and mobile multi-national approach to the lower force levels but important defence needs of the new NATO strategy.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I hope that the announcement of the reduction in the regular Army will not affect the Royal Irish Rangers. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the reduction will not affect the presence of our regular Army in Northern Ireland, where it has been involved in a big

operation for the past 20 years? If he cannot confirm that, will he assure us that he will consider the urgent extension of the Ulster Defence Regiment as an alternative?

Mr. King: For obvious reasons, I do not propose to deal with individual regiments today. Those are matters for discussion within the Army and the right hon. Gentleman will accept that consultation should take place. I can confirm, however, that, although the change will be reflected principally within the central region of NATO, there is absolutely no change in the commitment, role and tasks of the United Kingdom Army and its responsibility in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Secretary of State accept that there will be widespread disappointment at the limited nature of today's statement? A great deal of press speculation and hype, obviously encouraged by his Department, preceded his announcement. Ten months after the statement of 25 July we have no more details, no exact figures, no timetable and no indication of what is happening to the troops. There are 170,000 civil servants in the Ministry of Defence and there are 330,000 troops. Surely the Government are capable of assembling a better package in the time available.

The Secretary of State says that he hopes to have consulted the forces before the end of the Session. In his statement of 25 July he said that he had a duty to the troops, but that duty is taking a long time to fulfil. He must end the uncertainty and difficulty confronting so many members of our armed services and their families. The present situation is not good enough, and the House should recognise that.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's behaviour is disgraceful. He stands at the Dispatch Box and speaks as though the Gulf war had never occurred and as though there had been no events whatever between 25 July last year and now. He knows that in a military situation for obvious reasons, the first priority was to deal with the Gulf war. The hon. Gentleman's criticism that we should have made an earlier announcement would be valid if he were prepared totally to ignore the interests of our NATO allies and to drive ahead without conducting proper discussions on the NATO strategy. Before I take criticism from the hon. Gentleman, who should be ashamed of his defence policy because it will leave this country naked as his party has voted overwhelmingly for huge reductions in defence expenditure, I should simply say that NATO agreed that strategy—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. King: Many people in the armed forces are concerned about their future. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and his hon. Friends make all the noise that they can to interrupt matters of great importance. The people involved will be watching those Opposition Members and be aware of their attitude. NATO took the decision last Tuesday and Wednesday, and I am announcing the consequences of it so that we can proceed immediately with consultation. If we had been prepared, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan seems to be, to ignore our NATO allies and consultation, we could have made a fuller statement. I am not prepared to do that.

Sir Hector Monro: I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to the regimental system. Will he bear in mind in future the high standard of recruitment in the north of England and Scotland? Will he also bear in mind the tremendous commitment throughout the United Kingdom to our county and Scottish regiments?

Mr. King: I well appreciate that and I know that the capability of regiments to recruit is bound to be one of the criteria that the arms directors involved will wish to bear in mind when considering which future structure to recommend.

The Gulf

9. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed the situation in the Gulf with General Colin Powell.

Mr. Tom King: I met General Powell with Secretary Cheney in Brussels last week, when a number of current topics, including our co-operation in the Gulf, were discussed.

Mr. Mullin: When the Secretary of State was pouring scorn on those of us who took the view that sanctions rather than war would be the best way of coping with Saddam Hussein, was he aware that General Powell took the same view? With the oil wells still blazing, a tyranny installed in Kuwait, untold misery being inflicted on millions of people and Saddam Hussein still in power, does the Secretary of State agree that General Powell might have been right after all?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman attributes those comments to General Powell, but he knows perfectly well that General Powell made clear his support for the actions of the President of the United States. The hon. Gentleman is seeking, after the event, to rationalise the totally impossible position that he himself adopted. I do not think any serious observer of the scene would doubt that if we had taken that view Saddam Hussein would still be sitting in Kuwait, willing to impose on his people whatever suffering sanctions might bring, and the intolerable persecution of the Iraqis would still be continuing.

Mr. Wilkinson: Are we not paying the price of a job half done in the Gulf war? Will my right hon. Friend comment on General Powell's recent statement to the effect that the United Nations forces will be withdrawn from northern Iraq sooner rather than later? In those circumstances, how is the security of the Kurds to be assured against Saddam Hussein's forces and what will the role of the British be?

Mr. King: Without anticipating the next question on the Order Paper, may I say that in our humanitarian work for the relief of the Kurds we have sought to work closely with the United States and our other allies. We shall continue to do that and seek to concert our actions with them.

Sir Cyril Smith: When the Secretary of State had discussions with General Powell, did he discuss the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the fusiliers killed in the Gulf at the end of February? Did he, for example, suggest to General Powell that the result of the inquiry, which we understand that the Americans have had, should be made public to the relatives of those killed, who included a 17-year-old boy in my constituency? Do the

Government have any plans to release that report, which could be the subject of legal action once it is produced? Does he know that the mother of that 17-year-old boy was visited this weekend by her son's colleagues who were present when the accident involving the Americans took place? Those boys told the parents that the officers had instructed that they must not discuss this matter with them —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a very long question. Perhaps it is a subject for an Adjournment debate.

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, this is a serious and tragic matter. I know that the concern of General Powell and the allied commanders about the events is real. The hon. Gentleman will know that a formal board of inquiry has been set up. He will also know that the United States has promised to give all the help that it can. I do not wish to comment further now on this serious and tragic matter.

Iraq (Kurds)

10. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the deployment of Royal Marines to Northern Iraq.

16. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the British forces present in Iraq to protect the Kurds.

Mr. Tom King: Three Commando Brigade was deployed to northern Iraq as a temporary measure to help provide humanitarian assistance to Kurdish refugees and the necessary reassurance to persuade the Kurds that it would be safe for them to come down from the mountains and return home. I am pleased to say that, thanks to the efforts of all allied forces, the majority of refugees along the Turkey-Iraq border have now come down from the mountains and are returning to their homes.

Mr. Nicholson: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the pride of my constituents, and my own pride as the son of a former Royal Marine, at the magnificent contribution made by the Royal Marines to this massive humanitarian effort. In my local newspaper, Lance Cpl. Bateman of 40 Commando reported on the Kurdish refugees' great appreciation of the marines. He said that the Kurds offered the marines hospitality, even if it meant offering the last of their food and drink. Could my right hon. Friend say——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such long questions are becoming a bad habit. These matters would also be better raised in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. King: There is no question but that we asked our commando brigade to undertake an incredibly difficult task. The brilliant way in which it discharged its duties is a measure of its confidence, training and absolute commitment. Others have played their part, but none was better than 3 Commando Brigade. I hope that the whole House shares my admiration for the way in which that brigade carried out an incredibly difficult job. Its efforts and those of others undoubtedly saved the lives of hundreds of thousands.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decisive action by our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his Department saved thousands of Kurds from certain death from appalling weather and the tyranny of Saddam Hussein? Will he pay tribute to the Royal Air Force and the Chinook pilots for their magnificent work? In adverse weather, they made sure that vital supplies were airlifted to the refugees on the mountain tops.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the Chinook and other RAF pilots who were engaged in the air drop. As I think that the House knows, some of those who volunteered had just returned from the Gulf and had barely a few days leave. They as much as anyone are responsible for saving a fantastic number of lives. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asked for Operation Haven to be launched, and we owe a great debt to our pilots and the marine commandos and the other forces involved. It is thought that 15,000 Kurds died. That is tragic, but very many more could have died.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Now that the Iraqi Government have clearly breached resolution 688 by sending troops into the towns of Salumaniya, Dihok, Dahuk, Sahko and Arbil, and the repression of the population has begun once again, how is it possible for the British and American Governments to begin withdrawing troops when clearly the Kurds do not feel that they will be secure in future with only United Nations forces carrying side arms available for their protection?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman is making a challenge and condemning a Government who took the quite unprecedented step of making forces available to go to the relief of millions of people whose lives were in desperate jeopardy. We do not have to prove our credentials. We went there for humanitarian purposes and to save lives. We shall certainly be anxious to see that the benefits of what has been achieved are not lost.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: We record our appreciation for the excellent and important work carried out by the Royal Marines. Can the Secretary of State say when they will be coming home as their relatives are anxious to know?

Mr. King: I understand that, and that thought is very much in our minds. Having met the commandos concerned, I know that they understand and are proud of the contribution that they have been able to make. As soon as it is possible for them to come home, they will come home. They have had a very important job to do and they have done it outstandingly well.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend share the widespread concern that in certain cases banks have not been fully passing on, particularly to smaller businesses, the full very recent and welcome reduction in bank base rate?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I am very concerned about the growing level of complaints from small businesses that they are being harshly treated by their banks. I discussed that matter with the Governor of the Bank of England 10 days ago and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is taking this forward with the individual chairman of each of the clearing banks. The banks themselves can be in no doubt whatever about the strength of feeling on this, and they are as aware as anyone that their interests lie in having a sound base of small firms around for the future.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister think that recession, rising unemployment and increasing poverty will improve or make worse the health of the nation?

The Prime Minister: The health of the nation is improving. The policies that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be announcing in a few moments about preventive health medicine will also make further improvements. No one I know of with any experience or knowledge whatever doubts the improving quality, quantity or nature of health of the people in this country at the present time.

Mr. Kinnock: I hope that the forthcoming Green Paper will therefore include specific policies to combat unemployment and poverty, although I very much doubt it. The Government have brought us two recessions in 12 years. Unemployment is higher and poverty is more widespread. As there is a very definite link between low income and high rates of death and illness in poor families, will the Prime Minister now do something effective to combat unemployment and recession instead of saying that it is a price well worth paying?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman will soon learn, there are specific targets in the health proposals that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will announce in a few moments. We set targets in other contexts a year or so ago, which have been met by doctors in terms of improving health care, and the targets will be met on this occasion as well.

As for unemployment, the right hon. Gentleman's comments were rich when every time his own party has been in government, when that Government left office unemployment was twice as high as it was when they entered government. The right hon. Gentleman's present policies would have the same effect. His minimum wage policy would destroy jobs, his penal tax proposals would destroy incentives, and Labour's tax on savings would destroy investment. What would then happen to jobs?

Mr. Kinnock: Clearly, when the Prime Minister cannot give a straight answer to a straight question, his last refuge is to try to sound like the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher)—no wonder she said at the weekend, "I chose him."

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman, week after week, sinks to a new low. We shall see how low he can sink. We shall see how far he can sink in the months ahead.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that not passing on the reduction in the base rate to small businesses is damaging to the economy? Would it not be a good idea for the British Bankers Association to make it mandatory for its members immediately to reflect any reduction in the base rate?

The Prime Minister: A large amount of lending is, of course, tied specifically to the base rate and is therefore amended automatically. It is those loans that are renegotiated that I think cause the particular problems. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is examining that matter with the chairmen of the clearing banks.

Q2. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: In view of the horrific attacks by dangerous dogs that have taken place in the past two weeks or so, and the Government's dithering about what measures to implement to take account of those attacks, will the Prime Minister now agree that in the interests of responsible dog ownership a dog registration scheme should be introduced? Will he introduce such a scheme at the earliest possible opportunity?

The Prime Minister: So decisive have the Government been that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be introducing a Bill later this week to deal with the problem of dangerous dogs. On the specific point of general dog registration, I continue to hold the view that such a scheme would be ineffective, bureaucratic, expensive to operate and difficult to enforce.

Sir Gerrard Neale: Has my right hon. Friend seen—and, if so, will he comment on—the report by the respected City institution, the Nomura Research Institute, that if interest rates were 11 per cent. at the next general election they would rise to 16 per cent. in the unlikely event of a Labour victory?

The Prime Minister *rose—[Interruption.]* I will wait for a little silence—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is taking up a lot of time. I call the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I have absolutely no doubt that my hon. Friend and the analysis that Nomura has made are right. Financial markets have no confidence whatever in Labour's ability to keep down inflation and no confidence in its capacity to protect our competitive position. By contrast, the major independent forecasters agree with us that we shall have inflation at 4 per cent. by the fourth quarter of this year. The other point about Nomura's analysis is very clear—it shows that Labour's first priority would not be pensions and child benefit, but an immediate and necessary hike in interest rates and mortgage rates.

Q3. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Campbell: Does the Prime Minister share the concern of many in the House about the events of last night in Vilnius? Will he take the opportunity both now and in July to impress upon Mr. Gorbachev and his generals that western economic co-operation and

assistance depend upon a recognition of human rights and an acceptance of the right of self-determination for the people of Lithuania and of the other Baltic states?

The Prime Minister: I can say nothing more to the hon. and learned Gentleman other than that I agree with him.

Mr. John Browne: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 776—about Grenadier guardsmen Povey, Hicks and Ray who, in 1989, had their legs blown off in Canada—which has now been signed by more than 200 right hon. and hon. Members on a cross-party basis, including the Secretary of State for Defence of 1989? It calls on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to look personally into the case with a view to granting an ex-gratia compensation payment, thus creating a good precedent. What progress has been made in the past month?

The Prime Minister: I am not yet in a position to tell my hon. Friend precisely what the outcome will be, but I am satisfied that the proper grounds for compensation should be on the basis of legal liability, and it is upon that basis that I shall examine the matter.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Hood—no, Mr. John Garrett—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am looking for an hon. Gentleman who has not asked a question. Let us have Mr. Garrett.

Mr. John Garrett: Does not Britain deserve better than a lame duck Government, limping from one public relations fiasco to another?

The Prime Minister: As it has a Government who are announcing new and fresh policies every day, the question does not arise.

Q4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: During the course of his busy day, has my right hon. Friend been able to read the comments of Mr. Gavin Laird about a minimum wage? Does he agree that a minimum wage would be cruel and heartless because it would lead to much higher prices and to an increase of 50 per cent. in the level of unemployment?

The Prime Minister: I have, of course, read them. I enjoyed them and I agree with them, as do many other people. The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition's plan for a minimum wage has very few friends left: the Fabian Society has said that there would be massive job losses; Mr. Laird thinks that the plan is nonsense; the engineers and electricians recognise that Labour's policy is nonsense; and the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has said that himself in the past. Even the *Sunday People*, which is hardly a Conservative news sheet, stated in its editorial:

> "Labour's plan for a national minimum wage is not the answer. It would only cause more unemployment and deny jobs to those who need them"—

[Interruption.] Opposition Members do not like that because they know that it is true.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister has rightly criticised the banks, but does he not accept that small business failures have increased by 68 per cent. with nearly 8,000 mainly small firms going to the wall in the first quarter of this year? The Prime Minister has criticised the banks, but does he feel any personal responsibility for this?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, very many additional small firms have grown and thrived in recent years. All Conservative Members, including myself, regret the loss of small businesses in the past year or so. However, what is essential is to create the circumstances in which businesses can thrive and survive and in which fresh businesses can be created, as has happened so widely in the past 10 years. That requires reducing inflation to a low level and keeping it there. That is the policy we are pursuing, and every independent commentator now acknowledges that we are succeeding in that policy.

Q5. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will my right hon. Friend find an early opportunity to visit north-west Hertfordshire to see for himself the £40 million worth of new investment in the national health service that has been made under this Government? Will he contrast the fact that at this very moment a new maternity unit is being completed in which babies can be born in the 1990s with the fact that, under the last Labour Government, babies had to be born in the clapped-out facilities of the former workhouse?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point. Capital expenditure on hospitals in England has grown in real terms in the past 12 years by 62 per cent. to £1·7 billion. In contrast, as the House well recalls, under the last Labour Government capital spending on hospitals in the national health service was cut by nearly 16 per cent. because the Labour Government lost control of the economy and inflation and would not take the necessary decisions to bring inflation down.

Mr. Clelland: Did the Prime Minister see the recent "Panorama" programme entitled, "Scuppering British Shipbuilders", which demonstrated how the Government have killed off merchant shipbuilding in Britain? Is he aware that unless the right decision is made about Challenger 2, "Panorama" will soon be making another programme about the killing off of the British tank manufacturing industry? Will he ensure that the decision that we now understand is to be made before the end of this month is made not only in favour of the British Army but in favour of British manufacturing and British workers?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no, I did not see the programme to which he referred, but on his substantive point—the question of a new tank for the Army—I hope that a decision on equipment for our future main battle tank fleet will not be delayed too long. When the appropriate military conditions are right for us to make the decision, we shall do so.

Q6. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: Has my right hon. Friend had time to read the report of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, which shows that for the past year Britain's strike record has been at its lowest for 56 years? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we were to legalise secondary strikes, unofficial strikes and flying pickets, that strike record would be undone? Is it not odd that that is precisely the policy of the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. It is also the case that our employment legislation, which was opposed at every step by the Opposition has helped to transform industrial relations in Britain. But the Opposition do not care about industrial relations—they are obsessed with public relations.

Strategy for Health

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am today publishing a Green Paper "The Health of the Nation" setting out the Government's proposals for the development of a strategy for health for England. In the light of responses and consultation, I shall publish a White Paper early next year setting out our definitive proposals.

This is the first time that an explicit health strategy has been proposed for England. At its heart is the proposal to set challenging health objectives and targets to improve the overall health of the nation. Their scope reflects the fact that my task as Secretary of State is to focus on better health just as much as better health care. The Green Paper enshrines that wider health objective. I am happy to tell the House that our approach has been endorsed in warm terms by the World Health Organisation whose "Health For All by the Year 2000" programme started the production of such strategies world wide.

The NHS contribution to such a strategy is derived from the NHS reforms, which require local and therefore national health strategies to be explicitly discussed and adopted. Debate in recent weeks has focused on one aspect of the changes—the role of the providers. We are convinced of the benefits to patients that will flow from the clear separation of responsibility for commissioning health care by health authorities on the one side and, on the other side, the provision of health care by hospitals and others. That separation is already producing better management in directly managed hospitals and services and in NHS trusts. Freeing hospitals from unnecessary interference in day-to-day management produces obvious benefits. Equally important, however, are the benefits flowing from the new and strategic role for the health authorities and indeed for the Department of Health itself.

In the past, both the Department of Health and health authorities have been preoccupied with issues of day-to-day local management. That has been to the detriment of the need, locally and nationally, to take a far more strategic view of what is needed to improve health. What is more, the reforms put in place a clear mechanism by which that strategy can be turned into reality. The new contracting process provides for the authorities an open and powerful means by which they can specify and check the content, the quality and the quantity of the health services for which they are paying. Concentrating on their strategic role allows health authorities to base those contracts on a proper assessment of what is needed both by way of services and by way of other action to improve the health of the local population.

However, our administrative and financial reforms of the health service are a means to an end—better health and better health care—not an end in themselves. We now have in place district health authorities and family health service authorities, together with fund-holding general practitioners, whose duty is to identify local health needs and then to deploy their money in the best way to meet those needs. Most priorities will quite properly be set locally—though, of course, I remain accountable as Secretary of State for seeing that those local health strategies are comprehensive and set in a reasonable way. But it is also right that some national priorities should be set where it is obvious that England as a whole has a common interest in a nationwide improvement.

Clearly a health strategy needs to go wider than the NHS, and wider than my own immediate responsibilities as Secretary of State for Health. The Green Paper addresses these wider health issues and responsibilities. It builds on other recent developments such as the recent reforms of food safety laws and last year's environment White Paper.

However, if this strategy is to work it cannot be just for Government and the NHS; it must be for the nation as a whole. In achieving our targets, we shall ask all those with a concern for health to play a part—the NHS in health promotion, treatment and rehabilitation; schools in educating young people on health and encouraging physical activity; local authorities across a range of statutory services.

In addition, there are the vital roles of voluntary groups, community health councils, employers, trade unions and the media. They can help to get across to people the facts about, for example, how to avoid coronary heart disease, and giving them opportunties to put knowledge into practice. A lot of what needs to be done is for the citizen individually to do—stopping smoking, having a healthy diet, taking the exercise that we need. The strategy must therefore command widespread support if it is to work. Such support and involvement will be crucial to its success. That is why we are consulting widely.

The proposed approach has two main elements: first, the selection of key areas for health improvements—these will be causes of significant preventable and premature death or ill health; secondly, the setting of clear objectives and targets in each key area, and monitoring progress.

The health of the people of England is already very good. Life expectancy is now 73 years for men and 78 for women, compared to 44 and 47 only a century ago. There has been an increase of two years in life expectancy in the last decade alone. This means that we have already met the WHO target for life expectancy for the year 2000. Perinatal and infant mortality rates—key indicators of any nation's health—are steadily improving. Both have fallen dramatically since 1979, again enabling us to meet the WHO target. That is what we have achieved so far. It shows what we can do. Our task now is to improve still further our record in these and other areas.

"The Health of the Nation" examines the key areas for further improvements. They range from major causes of premature death such as coronary heart disease, cancers, stroke and accidents through risks to health such as smoking, unhealthy diet and drinking too much, to major causes of ill health such as diabetes, asthma and mental illness. The Green Paper also looks at other areas of importance such as the health of pregnant women, infants and children, rehabilitation services, and food safety.

The discipline of target setting is central to the strategy. In each key area the Green Paper discusses targets, both national and local. They cover such things as a 30 per cent. reduction in death from both coronary heart disease and stroke below age 65 by the year 2000; a one third cut in cigarette smoking by the year 2000; and a 95 per cent. target for childhood immunisations by 1995. There will also be quality of service targets. In particular, health authorities must set targets to meet hospital appointment times.

Although we have taken care to suggest a range of objectives which we believe will win support from most professionals, it is essential that it is understood that today's Green Paper is the beginning of an intensive five-month discussion process. It is aimed at achieving, as nearly as possible, national consensus. Simply to impose a shopping list of proposals without true consultation will not work. Success will depend not only on the commitment of Government, the professions and the 1 million staff whom we employ in the NHS, but on real commitment by the public.

Following the consultation period, which will last until the end of October, we shall publish a White Paper setting out a definitive statement of strategy. It will set out what we will do to meet the targets. We hope to receive a wide range of suggestions about how different fields of activity can contribute to the strategy. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These matters are of considerable concern to those who listen to our proceedings. The Secretary of State should be given a fair hearing.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the strategy develops, more key areas will be added. It is important that we begin with a manageable and achievable list of targets. To be successful, we must be realistic. I intend to make sure that there is a clear lead from the centre. This strategy must be backed by a firm commitment from Government as a whole and from the Secretary of State for Health in particular. I—along with my colleagues in the many other Departments that have a key role to play—will give it that unequivocal backing.

My role as Secretary of State for Health, having launched the strategy process, will be to assess what needs to be done, monitor progress and ensure action. To help me to drive forward the strategy and secure strong support for it, I shall be establishing an English health strategy steering group with a wide membership from both outside and within the NHS. It will be supported by various working groups, including membership from across Whitehall. They will begin work during the consultation period, and continue after the White Paper to help to implement and monitor the strategy.

Finally, let me return to my earlier point. Getting the organisation of the NHS right has been vital. But the final yardstick must be the quality of health care that the NHS provides—and, even more, the health of the nation it serves. Those are the ultimate tests that must be applied to our policies as a Government; it is on them that we shall gladly be judged.

The production of a strategy for health set into motion by this Green Paper, and the action that follows, will secure further improvements in the country's health. It complements our commitment to high-quality health care with a wider commitment to the nation's health. This health strategy is an important new undertaking—the first ever strategy for England. The Government are determined to make it a success. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Let me begin by welcoming, on behalf of the Opposition, the Government's decision to set targets for health promotion. As the Green Paper fairly admits, the Government have come to that task later than many other countries, but it is all the more welcome because of that. There will be broad support, not just in the House but outside, for a health strategy that embraces health and not just disease.

The Secretary of State, however, will want today to mark the beginning of a debate on his proposals, not the end. May I therefore press him on three aspects of his statement?

First, can the right hon. Gentleman tell us how he arrived at the targets? So that we can judge how challenging they really are, will he tell the House what reduction in the incidence of heart disease and strokes he expects, judging by current trends? Is he aware that his figures, in his Green Paper, show that his targets for heart disease and strokes are lower than the reduction in the past decade, when there were no targets? The Secretary of State shakes his head. His own annex, however, shows that, in 1980 and 1989, coronary heart disease went down by 28 per cent.—an annual rate of more than 3 per cent. The Secretary of State proposes a reduction of 30 per cent. between 1988 and 2000, which is an annual reduction of 2·5 per cent. Similarly, his own annex shows that in 1980 and 1989 there was a 31 per cent. reduction in the incidence of strokes—an annual rate of 3½ per cent. He proposes a reduction of 30 per cent. between 1988 and 2000. That is not only less than 31 per cent.; it is an annual rate of 2·5 per cent.

Britain has one of the worst heart disease records in Europe. Is the Secretary of State really satisfied with those targets, which set a lower rate of reduction than is currently being achieved?

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): It is a mistake. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not permissible for our proceedings to come to a stop in the middle of the response to a statement.

Mr. Cook: It is a matter of great regret to me that we cannot hear the explanation of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

Secondly, is the Secretary of State aware that, although the setting of targets will be welcomed, there will be disappointment that the Green Paper proposes no new Government action to achieve them? If it is a strategy for health, it needs both targets and policies to match. If Ministers want people to give up smoking, will they give up Britain's resistance in Europe to tougher controls on tobacco advertising? Will the Secretary of State confirm that today—the very day on which he is talking about targets on smoking—the Under-Secretary of State for Health in another place is speaking out in Luxembourg against precisely those tougher controls on tobacco?

If Ministers want people to adopt a healthier diet, will they begin at the beginning and bring back nutritional guidelines on school meals, which they scrapped? If Ministers want to cut down on alcohol abuse and preventable accidents, will they now accept the case for random breath testing? If Ministers, especially the Secretary of State, are serious about screening targets, will the right hon. Gentleman bring back the free eye test and drop the charges that, in two years, have stopped 5 million people getting that health check? Will the Secretary of State recognise that it is not enough to urge the public to change their life style if the Government are not prepared to change their policies?

[Mr. Cook]

Thirdly, a gaping hole in the statement was the absence of the word "poverty". Does the Secretary of State accept that his own tables in the Green Paper show that, as long as people remain poor, they are likely to remain in poor health, that those on the lowest incomes have more chance of a heart attack and that children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation have higher rates of respiratory disease? Will he study with care the shaming report published yesterday which confirmed that many children on income support go hungry and that all of them have a poor diet? Will he tell his colleagues at the Department of Social Security that the health of those children needs a better response than it got yesterday from Ministers who blamed the children's mothers? Cannot the Government admit that, in doubling the number of children in poverty, they have damaged the health of those children?

I want to end on a note of consensus by congratulating the Secretary of State on his decision to publish the document as a Green Paper for consultation. Does he now recognise that if the Government had been prepared to consult on their proposals for the NHS, he might not have run smack into so many of his problems of the past couple of months? As this is a document for consultation, may I assure the Secretary of State that we will strengthen his targets with our policies when we announce our response as the next Labour Government?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is an easy answer to the hon. Gentleman's facile first point. As one makes progress, it becomes more difficult to maintain the trend. That is not a difficult concept for the hon. Gentleman to understand. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the targets that we propose are challenging, and would not be met simply by present trends on the best predictions. That is a straightforward answer to his question. It is not difficult for him to understand that it is easier to make the first step to progress and that it gets more difficult as one goes on.

The hon. Gentleman then quoted from the rag-bag of uncosted old policies which Labour raked up again yesterday to make a number of points. The fundamental point about Labour's rather feeble document is that it does not address the World Health Organisation's targets. It contains no objectives and no targets; it simply collects together a number of uncosted policies of dubious merit.

The action on our targets is related to the whole structure of the reforms that we have introduced. For the first time in the history of this country, we have a capacity to set health strategies and to enforce them. There is nothing in the hon. Gentleman's half-baked proposals which would enable him to deliver any health outcome.

The hon. Gentleman asked a question about tobacco advertising. The German, Dutch and Danish Governments today, with us, have put it to the Greek Commissioner concerned that it ill behoves the country that lobbies for the maintenance of subsidies for the growing of tobacco to lecture the rest of us about tobacco advertising. There is no correlation whatever between the countries in Europe that have banned tobacco advertising and progress on diminishing smoking—rather, the contrary—so I think that the hon. Gentleman's hasty advocacy of that policy will turn out to have been badly based.

I believe that serious civil liberties issues are involved with random breath testing. The authoritarianism of the Labour party is showing itself again. I served on the Select Committee on Home Affairs with many Labour Members who argued passionately against the sus law, and the ability of the police to stop people at random. Yet now the Labour party is arguing for exactly that policy.

As the House knows, 40 per cent. of people are exempt from the charges for eye tests and there is no evidence of a long-term drop in referrals to eye hospitals as a result of our policy.

The hon. Gentleman's final substantial point is in one sense correct. Everybody knows that an increase in wealth is generally good for one's health—although with one or two diseases, such as breast cancer, the correlation is the other way round. We, like other countries, have been making progress throughout the income levels—for example, on perinatal mortality—but we, and they, still have more to do. Sweden is among the countries in Europe which spend the most—it employs 9 per cent. of its GDP and 10 per cent. of its total work force in health—yet it has widening disparities in health, according to the latest evidence. It is true that differences still exist, but such discrepancies are profoundly difficult to attack.

It is clear that the Conservatives stand for more successful economic policies, which over the lifetime of Governments always increase wealth far more speedily than do those of Labour Governments. In the NHS we now have the capacity, which the hon. Gentleman opposed in every respect, to target health resources towards deprived areas. The hon. Gentleman opposed the GP contract, which enables us to do that, and every other similar step in our health reforms.

We have specifically targeted £500 billion to the poorest families in the past two years. Since the survey that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, there has been an 8 per cent. increase in support for the poorest families. Families in difficulty have even greater need of the help which we can give through better education, information and support for a healthy diet.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has, as so often, failed to rise to the scale of the challenge offered to him today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the Second Reading of the Child Support Bill is to take place today, and there is a great demand to take part in that important debate. I ask hon. Members to confine themselves to asking questions rather than making statements about a document, which as the Secretary of State for Health has said, is a Green Paper to which we shall doubtless return on numerous occasions.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): As none of the steps on health would have been possible without the work on the reforms and on the doctors' contract, which have led to so much immunisation and checks on older people, does not my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State find it strange that not only the Opposition but the medical profession have fought both the reforms and the contract tooth and nail for a long time?

While my right hon. Friend's mind is on the question of preventive medicine, please will he think again about the Government's policy that has led to so many people not going for eye tests? Already hundreds of thousands of old people simply cannot afford to have their eyes tested. Early signs of cancer, heart disease and a number of other

conditions are being missed. Will my right hon. Friend please think specifically about bringing back free eye tests for older people?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. It would be impossible to talk sensibly about developing a health strategy for England if we did not have in place the reforms that we have introduced. It would be simply to whistle in the wind if we did not have the delivery mechanism that we now have through the local health strategies and local health contracts between purchasers and providers. The hon. Member for Livingston probably knows that because in his rag-bag document there is a sort of acknowledgement of it. He says that he would have performance contracts, or something of the sort, in what he calls a medical market.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) has been a doughty campaigner for eye tests. The £100 million which has come back into the health service is being better applied in other areas than if it was spent on the 60 per cent. of people who no longer receive free eye tests. As I said, 40 per cent. of people are exempt from the charges. I believe that the other 60 per cent. can afford the small charge for eye tests. The trends in the numbers attending for eye tests are now up again.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The objectives which the Secretary of State outlined have more potential to achieve cross-party consensus than the institutional changes in the health service which are being carried out at present. When the Secretary of State promises wide consultation, does he mean consultation with other political parties, as happened, for example, on the poll tax? Does he understand that many people in other political parties would take his promise of wide consultation more seriously if he had displayed willingness to listen to the overwhelming evidence on the institutional changes in the health service? The consultation on the institutional changes produced an emphatic no to the Government's proposals.

What are the implications of the statement for Scotland? How do the Government propose to follow the approach outlined today within a Scottish health context?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, who is on the Bench beside me, is pursuing parallel initiatives.

On the institutional changes, it is typical of the hon. Gentleman's party to oppose what it takes to be the unpopular aspects, which are necessary. If we are to shift priorities, there will have to be changes in the institutional arrangements. We are putting in place mechanisms to make a reality of what I have talked about today. Under the present system, it would not be possible to make a reality of the health strategy that I have proposed. But the hon. Gentleman supports the objectives. If one supports the objectives, one must support the means to make them a reality.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I welcome the Green Paper. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there are two principal matters ? The first is the resources which go into the national health service. Will he confirm that the resources have increased by some 50 per cent. since the Labour years up to 1979? Secondly, and even more importantly, the number of patients going through the hospitals underlies the strategy. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the number has increased by 41 per cent. in the York health authority and by 40 per cent. in the Yorkshire region since Labour was in power? Do not those two local and regional examples stand well in the light of the paper that my right hon. Friend presented to the House today?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is worth remembering that we have increased by a full percentage point the proportion of gross domestic product spent on health. In 1978-79 the proportion was 4·7 per cent. and in 1991-92 the proportion of GDP put into the NHS is 5·7 per cent. The proportion fell by 0·1 per cent. under Labour when it was last in office.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) is also right about the excellent performance of the health service in increasing treatment in recent years. It is in order to maintain that progress that we need further to improve the organisation of the health service.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): In his statement the Secretary of State made special reference to the importance of diet. We readily concur with that sentiment. As a result of his statement, will instructions go to the Department of Education and Science to provide once again adequate midday meal for hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren who have been denied that facility for several years? Many school kitchens have been closed down. For a start, will the Secretary of State at least make a move in that direction to ensure that children do not go outside school and buy bags of crisps and so on for lunch but receive a balanced meal planned by a dietician?

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities employ dietary advisers and many schools provide very good, healthy meals. However, I do not believe that many of the traditional school meals would score highly according to modern dietary reckoning.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the general practitioners' contract is the major step forward in terms of monitoring, health promotion and protecting the frail and the elderly? Is he therefore surprised that the Labour party wants to abolish it? Is that because it is more eager to win the battle of the headlines rather than the battle for health?

Mr. Waldegrave: I thought that the Opposition's document was rather a damp squib because, as the newspapers knew, it had all been published before and it did not address the issue in question—the production of World Health Organisation-type health objectives. My hon. Friend is right to remind us that the Opposition's record on health objectives and making them real is extremely bad. They opposed the GP contract, saying it could not be done—they were wrong. We are now discussing whether we should raise further some of those targets, for example, a target of up to 95 per cent. for immunisation. We are putting the mechanisms in place to make those health gains real.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does the Secretary of State accept that many people at present working in primary health care will think that his statement is nothing more than party-political hype?

Recently the director of public health in the Rotherham borough published his second annual report, which was

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

drawn up through the family health services authorities and in conjunction with the area health authority and the community health council. That report clearly outlines the problems in terms of the need for primary health care, but the authority does not have the resources to do things about the high incidence of heart disease and other illnesses in South Yorkshire. When will the right hon. Gentleman's Department resource the current health service so that it can do many of the things that I do not believe a committee in Whitehall can do?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have the advantage over the hon. Gentleman of already having talked to a large number of senior health professionals about this matter. He will find that he is wrong. I applaud the fact that strategies of the kind that the hon. Gentleman described are being identified—which is because of the reforms that we have put in place. We shall now have the mechanisms to make a reality of the improvements that are needed. Those improvements would not be possible under the old system that the Labour party is defending.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, now that the country has two documents before it purporting to set out the strategy for primary health care, the country is entitled to judge their relative merits? In that regard it is worth contrasting that, whereas there are no objectives set in the Labour party's document, that of my right hon. Friend courageously sets specific objectives for health improvement. It is also worth remembering that, although capital expenditure under this Government has risen by 62 per cent., under the Labour Government it fell by 16 per cent.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. We are serious about improving the mechanisms for the delivery of health care and about producing, for the first time, a commitment across Whitehall, involving all Government Departments, to improve the health of the nation. It is obvious to anyone who looks at the two documents that that produced by the Opposition is not a WHO-type document. It would not be received as such, and it would not contribute much to discussions of this issue.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): May I remind the Minister that it is now more than three years since I introduced a Bill to compel public houses to have no-smoking areas? It was approved by a vote. Since then successive Ministers for Health have done nothing about it, including the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Will the Government now give an assurance that, in common with restaurants, planes, trains and the tube, pubs will be compelled to have no-smoking areas—or will the right hon. Gentleman still listen to his paymasters, the brewers, at the next election and refuse to introduce such areas?

Mr. Waldegrave: Today we are concerned with setting objectives; we shall then move on to discuss the best means by which to achieve them. Great progress has been made by means of voluntary agreements in the sensible direction for which the hon. Gentleman argues. Whether that needs statutory back-up will need analysis. We shall then see whether or not we can achieve the objectives we have agreed.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he has made me a very happy lady today? He is on exactly the right lines. I warmly congratulate him, and I will support him in all his efforts to improve the health of the nation. Does he agree that Labour Members have it all wrong about the main diseases, in dealing with which we lead the world, such as heart disease? Does he further agree that they are diseases not so much of poverty but of affluence, which will be amply demonstrated later today in the bars and restaurants of the House as hon. Members proceed either to celebrate or commiserate, whichever is their preference, with cream cakes and double brandies?

Mr. Waldegrave: It gives me great pleasure to have given pleasure to my hon. Friend. I welcome her support. She is correct to say that some of the issues—for example, alcohol abuse and smoking—cannot be correlated with poverty. I urge her to agree also that another real issue —there is no point in denying it—is that if we can maintain progress in the economy so that people are better off, all the indications are that general health will also improve against most, though not all, diseases.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am disappointed that the Minister has not said that many people can contract heart complaints and hearing and breathing difficulties as a result of their occupations. If he is serious about prevention rather than cure, he will take his health team into factories where, in this day and age, men and women are having to work with asbestos, near welding techniques which can give them emphysema, where there is excessive noise and where sometimes they must handle oils and other substances which give them dermatitis. It is clear that the men who died on Piper Alpha died because of lack of safety. If the right hon. Gentleman is concerned with the health and longevity of the people, he will want to examine some of the factories in which they have to work.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman should not be disappointed in that respect because he will be happy to find, on reading the document, that we have given a high priority to occupational health and discuss the objective of an accident avoidance target, a complex issue about which we are serious. Let us not forget that a Conservative Government took decisive action against asbestos, and the numbers of health and safety inspectors are set to increase rapidly in future months.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend rightly identified heart disease as a major health problem for the nation. He will have noticed, as the House did, the deplorable hilarity with which the matter was dealt with by Opposition Members when it was raised. Does he agree that it is essential to preserve the excellence of hospitals, such as the world famous Papworth hospital in my constituency, in dealing with the situation? May we have an assurance that nothing in the policy is likely to cause the break-up of those excellent institutions, with their work being passed on in some other way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I appreciate that my hon. Friend takes a particular view of any proposals that might be made for the reorganisation of Papworth, and I note his advocacy yet again. The performance of Opposition Members today

has been shoddy—*[Interruption.]*—and I suggest that even some Labour Members believe that to have been the case. The puppies yap as the caravan passes on.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Will the Secretary of State undertake, as part of his review, to pay particular attention to the correlation between damp and black mould in homes and health? I believe it to be a contributory, if not a major, factor in cot and infant deaths, a problem in many parts of the country.

Mr. Waldegrave: The tragedy of cot deaths still baffles scientists to some extent. The hon. Lady will welcome the fact that in the document—the first time that it has ever happened in this country—we are presenting a strategy that runs across Government, with a major contribution from the Department of the Environment. It is difficult to set targets related exactly to housing, but the concentration of resources on improving the worst housing must be part of a general strategy for health.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement about a strategy for the nation's health, looking to the future. That, in turn, must raise the profile of health education. My right hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that I am a little disappointed that kidney patients, particularly elderly ones, are not mentioned. I am even more surprised that we do not yet feel that we can do anything for AIDS patients on the basis that more information is required. Will my right hon. Friend fill out that point?

Mr. Waldegrave: On my hon. Friend's first point, it is vital to emphasise that the comprehensive nature of health care must be maintained, including the care of kidney patients. We are dealing with priorities because, in some areas, compared with other countries, Britain needs to do better and in others, although we are doing well, with reasonable extra efforts we could do even better. Road traffic accidents are an example of the latter.

The Government are spending large sums on the terrible disease of AIDS. The difficulty about setting the objective to which my hon. Friend refers is that, with science as it is, we do not yet know what would be a sensible objective in terms of eradicating that disease. It may be sensible to develop subsidiary objectives to care for those who have the disease.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Is the Minister aware that there has been a huge increase in the number of cockroaches and ants in this country, perhaps because of the introduction of central heating? Will he look into the question of the extermination of such insects and the use of chemicals for extermination which will not damage the people who handle them or those whose houses are affected?

Mr. Waldegrave: I remember from my time as Minister for Housing the problem of pharaoh ants and other insects——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): That was probably when the problem started.

Mr. Waldegrave: It was not caused by my presence in that office; it was due to the reasons referred to by the hon. Lady. I cannot give a full response from the housing department to that point today, but I shall draw it to the attention of my colleagues.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Given the fact that a royal commission established under a previous Labour Government found that, even if 100 per cent. of GDP was spent on health, there would still be unsatisfied demand, and given that the Labour party is not offering one penny more for health should it come to power, is it not a valuable exercise for consumers to be consulted about the future direction of their health service and the targets that should be set? In that way, they can not only judge the system but see how well it is delivering the service for the first time since its inception.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the most fundamental point. After the reforms, there will be not only a requirement but a need for an explicit health strategy, locally and nationally. That will derive from the reforms. We are discussing that matter today to begin to deal with the problem. The matter is of great importance in the long-term history of the national health service and in the country.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The Secretary of State said that the charges for eye tests bring in £100 million. Will he admit that that figure tells us nothing about the people who cannot contribute to that figure—those who are too poor but are not exempted from the charge? Would it not be better for the Government to recoup the £100 million by abolishing the eye sight test fees and the tax relief that was given to people such as the Secretary of State, who can afford private health insurance?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have not yet retired, so I do not benefit from that relief. The arguments that I put to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) seem to be powerful. The charges are small and 40 per cent. of the population are exempt. Evidence shows that the number of people having eye tests is now up again. There seems to have been no falling off in the number of referrals to eye hospitals in the past year. I know that the hon. Gentleman, like my hon. Friend, has been a campaigner on those matters.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his extremely impressive statement, which was in stark contrast to the hot air that we heard yesterday. Does he feel that, within his health strategy, there is a role for alternative medicine, and above all for the study of allergies?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should not want to make those matters a primary objective of health care. However, as a constituency member representing the Bristol homeopathic hospital, it behoves me to make available—in that case on the national health service, if possible—the treatment required by many people.

On my hon. Friend's second point, may I warn the House that, true to form, in about a month's time, the Labour party will once again publish the document that it has published three times before and the BBC will, yet again, fall for it as a news story.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the Secretary of State accept that there is a relationship between poverty and ill health? Does he also accept that the high unemployment suffered in this country during the past 11 years has contributed in many towns and cities to the deterioration in the health of many families? Will he

[Mr. Eddie Loyden]

convey that message to his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Departments of Industry and Employment to ensure that that aspect of ill health is considered?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already spoken about inequalities in health. The hon. Gentleman represents a party that wins a remarkable double in such matters. A Labour Government have never left lower unemployment or lower waiting lists than they found, so I think that some modesty on that issue might be in order from the Labour party.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his team on this brilliant initiative? Not only is it sheer common sense to set targets and objectives that can be measured, but the spin-off that will occur in coming months as we roll on with the debate will cause many people to think and perhaps use a bit of self-discipline. I might cut down my weight, so watch this space.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and I would welcome more congruity in shape with my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), but we would not want to lose his contributions to our discussions in the House. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. Now that there is a proper management structure in the health service, it is sensible to set objectives towards which the service can work to enable the 1 million people employed in the service throughout the United Kingdom to begin to feel that the service has aims.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): In the past few days, the Secretary of State will have received from the district health authority that covers both his and my constituencies an identification of the crisis in health care in south Bristol—high mortality rates, very high infant mortality rates and a remoteness from the national health service. Indeed, on every criterion geared to identify health care, Bristol, South scores the highest. As a result of the reorganisation, there have been cuts in the numbers of intensive care beds and budgets, and a refusal to build the new Bristol, South hospital; and now there are to be redundancies. Will the Secretary of State explain to the people of Bristol how the document that he has presented today will improve their access to health care when it is built on reforms that have made access more difficult, not easier?

Mr. Waldegrave: The 30 or 40-year-old battle for a major hospital in south Bristol is the only factor that unites the hon. Lady and her predecessor. The hon. Lady should make the point that when we consider the distribution of health resources throughout the country —about which we hear a lot from Opposition Members —we realise that the Government are taking steps to ensure the fairer distribution of such resources nationally. That is partly what our travail is about. She should welcome that.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The setting up of the health strategy steering group is the most positive of the measures announced today. Will the group include members of the dental profession? Given that diet can play such a large part in improving our health and that without teeth one cannot eat, surely dental practitioners have a major role to play in improving the nation's health by giving advice about diet.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Contributions from dentists will certainly be included. The document also considers setting objectives for child dental caries. That is not because this country's record on that issue compares poorly internationally—in fact, we do well —but because we believe that it would be relatively easy to make further progress in that sphere and attach a high priority to it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister spoke about the incidence of ill health in factories. Does not he realise that factory inspections are at an all-time low and that the Department of Employment does not even enforce the notification of occupation of factory premises? The Secretary of State seems to be obsessed with changes in the institutions. Will it benefit the people of Bradford when Bradford NHS trust makes 300 people redundant and closes the baby unit at St. Luke's hospital and two other hospitals in Bradford? Surely that denies people access to medical facilities.

In terms of more NHS trusts, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that in his consultation process he will agree to a ballot of local people? If he is not satisfied with that and is convinced about the marvellous nature of his proposals, will he have the guts to tell the Prime Minister to have a general election about them?

Mr. Waldegrave: That was a characteristic contribution. The hon. Gentleman should realise that our capacity to look across the board at the health needs in his constituency and city has enabled us to make great advances in primary care in Bradford where there has been a dramatic reduction in lists. Health care in Bradford or Bristol, or anywhere else, cannot be improved simply by concentrating on acute hospitals. There must be a comprehensive local health strategy, and resources must be deployed across the board.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. I am sure that it will not take long for him to write a short note to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) giving an exposition of the law of diminishing returns because, plainly, the hon. Gentleman does not understand that law.

Will my right hon. Friend help me with a small problem which landed on my desk today? As a diabetic, I received a letter from consultants in diabetes telling me that the Government have withdrawn the free medical facilities that were previously available to all diabetics, even those who were not receiving medication. A confirmed diabetic being treated by diet alone was able to obtain the necessary testing equipment free. I am now told by the consultants who have written to me that you have changed that arrangement. If that is true, will you please reverse it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not address his question to me.

Mr. Holt: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that what the consultants have said in that letter is correct, in which case will he reverse his decision? If it is incorrect, the consultants should be ashamed of writing such a letter.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) understands the law of diminishing returns, because each time he publishes the same old proposal it seems to get less coverage.

It would have been helpful if my hon. Friend had given me notice of his question about his letter from consultants. I shall be happy to discuss it with him. He will be pleased to discover that the document states that we wish to develop targets for diabetes and asthma. I shall certainly discuss the consultants' letter with my hon. Friend and discover what lies behind it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has not the Secretary of State got the intellectual capacity to understand that for 12 years the Government have undermined the national health service, and spoken against intervention in a public service? He is electioneering to the British people and is substituting waffle for resources. Tory Members may be conned by that, but he can rest assured that people outside are not. It is time that he took his hook back to the senior common room and took all his Front-Bench colleagues with him.

Mr. Waldegrave: Of course electioneering is the last thing that the hon. Gentleman would do and would regard it as a disreputable activity. He seemed to betray one of the finest of the old Labour traditions, which was to value education. Perhaps I should not rebuke him for that.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): When my right hon. Friend consults on targets, will he please take no account of the appallingly low expectations of the Labour party? Does he recall that the chief Opposition spokesman on health said when we were negotiating the GP contract that the demands on doctors were so heroic that most of them would give up trying? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that four out of five of them have now succeeded in meeting those targets on child immunity? How many children might have died or now be suffering from crippling diseases if the Labour party had been setting the targets?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is a fair point. The Labour party is still standing by its ridiculous position that it will repeal that contract. It will allow the standards of immunisation and the targeting for cervical smears to go backwards and that will put many people at risk. That is very irresponsible, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) is right to continue to rub the nose of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in it. By making a very short-term alliance with the British Medical Association at the time, the hon. Member for Livingston has got himself hooked on a very irresponsible policy, just as he did in an alliance with the drug companies when he opposed the limited list. He was wrong also on that.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Given that the Secretary of State mentioned tobacco as a serious factor in relation to deaths and ill health in this country, why is he not prepared to take on the tobacco lobby specifically when we know that the tobacco companies have, in advertising terms, successfully targeted young people and especially young women? Is it not time that we took action against that advertising? Why will the Department of Health and the Government be opposing an EEC-wide ban on tobacco advertising? When drugs are such a scourge among young people, why has there been scarcely a mention of a proper attack on drugs in our society or of the need to provide a proper health programme for young people?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know whether the hon. Member was in the Chamber earlier when I answered a question about advertising. The issue is more complex. A further aspect that I did not mention earlier, but which I will refer to now, is that the countries that are in favour of a total advertising ban are among those with nationally controlled monopolies in the production of cigarettes. Some people believe that the suppression of advertising is not unconnected with the fact that they wish to protect those monopolies. There is no connection at all between those countries which have banned advertising and those which have done well in diminishing smoking. As I said earlier, the first thing for the European Community to do is to withdraw its subsidies from the growing of tobacco. That would be a much better first objective.

Drugs may be an area which should be targeted and perhaps the hon. Member for Stretford would propose that. We have not included drugs among the initial main targets in our discussion document because—and I make this point to everyone who wants to add additional targets—if we make everything a priority, then nothing is a priority.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): My right hon. Friend deserves widespread congratulation on having the courage to lay down targets so that we can assess later in the decade how well the Government are progressing towards achieving what my right hon. Friend has set out today. Is it not significant that the Opposition have refused to set out any targets not only so that they can simply snipe at the Government's targets, but, more importantly perhaps, because they are pledged to repeal the structural reforms which would be the only way to assess whether they had ever reached those targets?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is absolutely true. The connection between the reforms and the kind of targeting procedure that we are now undertaking must be emphasised. Unless we have the capacity to deliver, it is no good talking about objectives. The Labour party must have realised that it was in some danger here or it would not have gone to all the trouble of regurgitating its document yesterday and giving it to the press.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): At last the Government have produced a strategy for health promotion and have offered the nation targets by which that strategy can be judged. That action will be widely welcomed both inside and outside the House. Nevertheless, does my right hon. Friend accept that a large proportion of the population of this country is frankly suicidal in the sense that they will ignore all the advice of the Health Education Authority and health education officers and advice that they should moderate their diets, intake of alcohol and cigarettes and advice about healthy exercise? Given that the Government are not in favour of a nanny state, how does my right hon. Friend propose to meet the targets in the light of that opposition from such a large proportion of the population?

Will my right hon. Friend also consider the targets for eating and drinking? The Green Paper states that those targets should be reached by the year 2005. Will he

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

consider aiming to reach those targets by the year 2000, as that is important? Also, why is there no target in respect of the level of cholesterol in that range of targets?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the latter point, in the discussion we shall certainly consider whether those targets should be brought forward, raised or lowered. That is exactly what the discussions are now meant to do. We have issued a report about cholesterol testing and surveying.

My hon. Friend is a long-standing campaigner on these issues, and I pay tribute to his contribution. It is true that in a free country we cannot compel people to good health. I made that clear at the beginning of the Green Paper. There are some pressures, however, that both sides of the House regard as legitimate, and one of those is price. In relation to cigarettes and alcohol—this relates also to the question by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd)—we must ensure that the European Community, by the harmonisation of taxation levels, does not lower the levels of taxation on cigarettes and alcohol in 1992.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the welcome targets that he has set today will be achieved only if there is a full partnership between the Government, local government, employers and voluntary organisations, and that, for that partnership to be meaningful, they can play their full part only if they have targets and objectives to which to work? Is it not a fact that the Labour party's document which was published yesterday, without such targets and objectives, was designed to be meaningless, is meaningless and, like the rest of its health policy, means absolutely nothing to anyone?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is true. That document was not a great contribution to the debate, and I do not think that it will be long remembered. I agree with my hon. Friend. I specifically mentioned voluntary organisations in my statement. If the strategy is to work, it will not be done simply by Government or simply by the national health service. It must be done by persuading people in a range of organisations and by persuading individuals that it is worth doing. That is why it is worth having a proper consultation period and having discussions throughout the country to get people committed to the kind of targets that we are proposing.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In the consultations that are to take place on these excellent proposals, will my right hon. Friend reject some of the more facile and easy solutions that are sometimes offered? Does he agree that it is not an adequate response to the fact that many epidemiological surveys show that smoking is associated with various lung conditions and that other lifestyle factors may be every bit as relevant? Should not that sort of thing be borne in mind as well, otherwise merely to opt for the easy option of a total ban on advertising may miss some factors that are every bit as relevant?

Mr. Waldegrave: In my scepticism about the effectiveness of a general ban on advertising, I would not want to mislead the House into thinking that I did not believe that a continued, rapid fall in smoking would not be one of the best things that we could do for health. It would be one of the best things that we could do for health. Nobody knows the exact causation between lung cancer and smoking, but no one now doubts the absolutely clear statistical evidence that one goes with the other. It is central to our strategy to set a challenging target for the further diminution of smoking and to see that it comes about.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Is the Secretary of State aware that his hon. Friends are wrong in suggesting that he has courage in deciding on targets? They are 12 years too late. Will he have the courage, however, to deal with one target, and that is the practice of health service consultants saying to patients that they must wait 12 months or more for treatment, but end up treating them if those same patients go private?

Mr. Waldegrave: Everything that we are doing in the reorganisation of the health service is aimed at getting more health care for the money—the increasing amounts of money—that we are spending. Our record on health spending and on the number of people treated stands easy comparison with that of the hon. Gentleman's party, which, as I remind him once again, has never left waiting lists lower than it found them.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): If, as I believe, the health of the population is the result of the careful and considered application of science, medicine, compassion and resources, is not the population much more likely to be served by the calm and courteous rationality that my right hon. Friend has exhibited this afternoon than it is by shouting and leering and the kind of intellectual nonsense that has been exhibited by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? Perhaps one day the hon. Gentleman will become a fellow of All Souls. I shall look forward to that day.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is very kind. I am sure that the House would not want to miss the contributions of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). My hon. Friend must be careful because it is more dire an insult for him to describe the hon. Gentleman as "an intellectual" than for my hon. Friends to describe me as such.

Mr. Robin Cook: No doubt through oversight, the Secretary of State omitted to give us the figures, on current trends, for the reduction in coronary heart disease and strokes by the year 2000. Will he now tell the House those figures?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with those figures, but of course they will be speculative. However, I assure him that the targets that we are setting are challenging. That is what challenging means. They are not simply predictions.

BILL PRESENTED

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. John Gummer, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mr. Attorney-General and Mrs. Angela Rumbold, presented a Bill to prohibit persons from having in their possession or custody dogs belonging to types bred for fighting; to impose restrictions in respect of such dogs pending the coming into force of the prohibition; to enable restrictions to be imposed in relation to other types of dog which present a serious danger to the public; to make further provision for securing that dogs are kept under

proper control; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Wednesday 5 June and to be printed. *[Bill 169.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Ordered,

That the draft Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 99 (2) (Northern Ireland Committee),

ELECTRICITY

That the Proposal for a draft Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 published on 19th April 1991, being a Matter relating exclusively to Northern Ireland, be referred to the Northern Ireland Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Employment of Children Act 1973 (Amendment)

4.35 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Employment of Children Act 1973 in respect of the definition of "child"; and to make fresh provision for its commencement.

Most people think that if children find a job in which to earn a little pocket money, that is good. Indeed, many children do a few hours' work which they enjoy. It gives them a degree of independence, provides them with some money for extra clothing and helps them to keep up with their friends. The money that children from poor families earn is often important for the family's survival.

I agree with the prevailing public opinion that we would not want to prevent children from getting a taste of the world of work, but I am sure that hon. Members agree that that work must be properly regulated. It is our duty to see that children are not allowed to undertake work that involves lifting heavy loads or endangers their physical well-being in any way. We do not want children to work such long hours that they cannot benefit from their education. We do not want children to have accidents because of undertaking unsuitable work, and we do not want them exploited as a source of cheap labour in an adult job at a fraction of the adult wage.

The present laws date back to the very different world of the 1920s and 1930s and, in some ways, are inadequate for today's conditions. The entertainment industry, for example, has been fairly well regulated, but modelling, which has expanded enormously since the growth of television, is wide open to abuse. Those old national laws exist in conjunction with a plethora of local government byelaws, some of which look fine on paper, but are flouted throughout the country.

In 1970, considerable public anxiety was aroused as a result of research sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Security. It showed a lack of uniformity in the local byelaws and serious problems of enforcement. Following that, a private Member's Bill, which was considered uncontroversial, was passed unopposed, becoming the Employment of Children Act 1973. Its primary purpose was to provide a rational, uniform pattern of law-making throughout the country by removing the local authorities' powers to enact local byelaws and by giving the Secretary of State regulatory powers so that, after consultation, regulations could be made centrally for the whole country. The second purpose of the 1973 Act was to enable local authorities to appraise the work which boys and girls go into before they actually begin that work. The Act has never been implemented.

In answer to questions which hon. Members have asked from time to time, the Government have said that almost all local authorities have byelaws, but in January this year they said that they would look again at the 1973 Act if evidence should be forthcoming that children are being exploited.

Recent research by the Low Pay Units in Scotland and England and the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights has shown that there is a need for the 1973 Act to be enforced now. It has proved that need up to the

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

hilt, which is why I am presenting my Bill today. The Bill would bring up to date the Act's definition of a child and would provide for its implementation by January 1992.

Recent research shows that 43 per cent. of children in Britain between the ages of 10 and 16 have some type of paid work. That is almost 2 million children. They have been called the hidden army. Of those children, 74 per cent. are employed illegally, either working illegal hours, employed in work prohibited for children or working without a local authority permit under which education authorities are supposed to ensure that medical health checks are carried out and that conditions of work are not harmful to the child involved. Only one child out of 65 children interviewed from two schools in Strathclyde had such a permit.

Children on milk rounds start long before the legally permitted time of 7 am. Therefore, all children doing early morning milk rounds are working illegally. If I had the time, I could cite many other examples. Children are lifting heavy loads in street markets and heavy bags of soil in garden centres. Newspaper rounds are considered a suitable form of employment and 30 per cent. of children who have jobs do one. Many have benefited financially from such work and have come to no harm, but Sunday papers can weight up to 60 lb—far more than a postman is allowed to carry on his round. Children are working illegally in kitchens which have slippery floors and pans of hot oil or boiling water.

Unfortunately, hospital accident and emergency departments are not required to record accidents to children at work, but they should be. Hon. Members will be horrified to learn that research shows that one third of working children have accidents at work, such as a sewing machine needle going through a finger, losing the end of a finger in a bacon slicing machine, breaking limbs and spraining backs. Answers that children give about their accidents at work make sad reading.

It is not surprising that weary children have accidents at work. If one adds up the number of hours spent at school, the two or three hours' homework a night in the run-up to exams, the number of legally permitted hours of paid work and time helping the family in the house, it often comes to a long week of 50 to 60 hours—more than most adults undertake.

I have taught classes of children, many of whom were too tired to concentrate, and that is when I first became aware and concerned about the problem. It is clear that, although some children just do odd jobs which they enjoy and from which they benefit, many are used as a source of cheap, easily disposable labour, often to replace school leavers and part-time women workers.

On average, children earn about £1·80 per hour. About 500,000 children—24 per cent.—earn less than £1 an hour and 7 per cent.—a significant number when nearly 2 million children are working—earn less than 50p an hour. One hapless 16-year-old boy earned £1·50 after 20 hours of door-to-door selling—7p an hour.

Parents, children, teachers and employers are all woefully ignorant of the byelaws that are being honoured in the breach throughout Britain, leaving our children without the protection that we would all wish them to have. Children look to us for help and we are failing them. Our inaction is not fair to them.

Many aspects of child employment need to be reviewed, but the most immediate requirement is to replace the existing confusing patchwork of local regulations with national statutes which standardise practice and provide protection across the board. We need regulations which everyone will understand and know about and which will be properly publicised, monitored and enforced by the provision of a sufficient number of child employment officers. The few whom we have are trying valiantly to do an impossible task.

My Bill will not require precious parliamentary time. The 1973 Act is already on the statute book. We need to rectify the disgraceful negligence of all Governments who have left the Act unenforced for almost two decades.

I end with the words with which I ended my speech on Second Reading of the Children Bill two years ago when I first addressed the subject:

"Our children are our stake in the future, and it is our duty to protect them from exploitation of all kinds."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 1151.]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Ron Leighton, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Peter Archer, Mr. John Hughes, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. Tony Benn and Ms. Joyce Quin.

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN ACT 1973 (AMENDMENT)

Ms. Mildred Gordon accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Employment of Children Act 1973 in respect of the definition of "child"; and to make fresh provision for its commencement: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 14 June and to be printed. [Bill 170.]

Lloyd's of London

4.47 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, some 50 Members of the House are members of Lloyd's and four of those are members of the Government. I understand that Government orders for Ministers do not require them to divest themselves of their membership of Lloyd's while they are in office.

The Finance Bill is before the House—part of it, as usual, being taken on the Floor of the House and part of it in Committee. A letter from Lloyd's of London, signed by the chairman of that body, has come into my possession. I am anxious to notify you of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the section of the Bill which is dealt with in the letter could come before the House at any time.

The chairman of Lloyd's says:

"Thirdly, I have been pursuing with the Government for some time certain aspects of the tax arrangements for names. I had a meeting with the Chancellor last week when I received a sympathetic hearing. We discussed both reserving and the extension of the relief proposed in the Budget to Names."

It is with that latter point that I wish to deal now.

The letter refers to an extension of a concession to companies proposed in the Budget to members of Lloyd's. That would mean that rules in "Erskine May" which preclude an hon. Member voting when there is a clear pecuniary interest would apply both to members who are Conservative Back Benchers—the 50 members concerned are exclusively Conservatives—and to members of the Government.

The amendment in question could come before the House at any time, and as the chairman of Lloyd's has made it clear that he has

"received, as I have said, a sympathetic hearing, and I hope that I shall be able to report a successful outcome to you in my June address",

he clearly anticipates success.

I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will report my comments to Mr. Speaker—so that he can make a statement at the earliest opportunity—and make it clear that none of the right hon. or hon. Members who have an involvement in Lloyd's will be allowed to vote on that matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It appears from the hon. Member's remarks that the case that he puts is hypothetical at the moment. I am not sure whether Mr. Speaker has seen the letter to which the hon. Member referred, and I shall be grateful if he will let me have it. I can then draw it to the attention of Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

Child Support Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

As the House knows, the Bill follows from the White Paper published last autumn entitled "Children Come First"—itself in its title expressing a sentiment which I know right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise and support. Our proposals aim at benefiting children and those who care for them. In society today, increasing numbers of relationships are breaking down, but the breakdown of a relationship between parents does not remove the responsibility of the parents towards the children of that relationship. Having said that, I firmly acknowledge that parenthood is of course about much more than just financial responsibility. But financial provision is one very important part of the responsibility which parents owe to their children, and payments of child maintenance are a way of meeting that responsibility.

Regular maintenance benefits children. It provides a regular income, and serves, in a literal sense, to bring home the responsibilities that family members owe to one another. It also benefits parents looking after children, by providing a regular basis of what is sometimes called "portable" income which the parent can take with her when she moves, as so many lone parents want to do, from dependence on benefit into work. While it is a point of a somewhat different kind, it should not be ignored that, where maintenance can reasonably be expected but is not paid, the effect is to transfer the responsibility to taxpayers, many of whom will themselves be families who are bringing up their own children on perhaps quite modest incomes.

It is very widely—I might almost say universally—agreed that the present system of child maintenance is not working as it should. It is fragmented. It involves several different levels of courts, together, in many cases, with offices of my Department. It is too often slow. For example, a quarter of cases in magistrates courts take more than 70 days, or more than two months. It is unreliable. Payments not infrequently fall into arrears, the caring parent has to ask the courts to take action, and it can take weeks, or much longer, to re-establish payment. It is increasingly ineffective. In 1989, only 23 per cent. of lone parents on income support received regular maintenance, whereas 10 years before the figure was some 50 per cent. Lastly, it is inconsistent. People cannot predict with any certainty what their liabilities will be, and some variations in the levels of awards appear to have no systematic relationship to differences in circumstances.

Having considered all this, we concluded that significant change was needed, and the Bill represents the legislative framework within which we plan to bring about that change. That framework has been worked out in close co-operation between a variety of Government

[Mr. Tony Newton]

Departments—although the legislation comes before the House today as a DSS Bill. In particular, it had the close involvement of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, who introduced the Bill in another place. If I may say this without causing offence to my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, that interest is reflected in my right hon. and learned Friend's presence in the Chamber today and his interest in the Bill.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The child maintenance formula takes no account of the extra cost of caring for a disabled child, and the Bill makes no special provision for families with disabled children. That is a matter of deep concern to Mencap. I ask the Secretary of State sympathetically to address that concern, and to explain how he intends to cope with what is viewed as a serious problem by the organisations that represent the interests of disabled children.

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman shows slightly less than his usual patience. I thought he might have realised that I have barely got beyond the preamble to my speech. I am aware of the concern to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, and I promise to address it later in my speech.

The Bill's provisions cover the whole of Great Britain, and we intend to make comparable provision for Northern Ireland. As the White Paper made clear, proposals have been informed by the results of research commissioned by the Department, which has for some time been available in the Library, and has now been published in the normal way.

The principles behind our proposals have had widespread support from many quarters—including, I think, from all parts of the House. Our strategy has three main features, two of which are provided for in the Bill. First—this touches on the right hon. Gentleman's point—we shall introduce a clear and consistent formula by which maintenance assessments will be made, and rules by which those assessments will be reviewed, to take account of changing circumstances. The key features of that formula appear on the face of the Bill, and I shall come to a fuller explanation of them in a moment.

Secondly, we intend to set up a Child Support Agency, accountable through me to Parliament, which will bring together in one organisation all matters to do with the assessment, collection and enforcement of child maintenance in the great majority of cases. That will be a new, specialised organisation to do a specific and important task. Because its powers and duties fall to be expressed as belonging to the Secretary of State, there is no explicit reference to the Child Support Agency as such in the Bill itself.

The third part of our strategy does not appear in the Bill itself, for different reasons, but it is an integral part of our proposals. I refer to the benefit proposals, which are designed to make it easier to combine working with the responsibilities of looking after children. We intend to introduce regulations reducing the number of hours of work needed to qualify for family credit from 24 to 16 hours a week. In addition, parents with care who are receiving family credit, housing benefit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance will have the first £15 of their maintenance ignored in working out their benefit.

I hope that it may be for the convenience of the House if I outline the main provisions of the Bill itself. It sets out all the main elements of our policy, and contains much detailed material, and also a considerable number of powers to make regulations. That structure reflects the need to strike the right balance between two considerations.

On the one hand, it is obviously right to ensure that the main features of the new system are plainly set out in the Bill and are open to full debate at this stage. On the other, it is also obviously sensible not to burden the Bill itself with detailed, technical or procedural matters—not least because of the need to retain flexibility to adjust the detail in the light of practical experience once the new scheme has come into operation. *[Interruption.]* I notice that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is giggling. However, as a former Social Security Minister, the hon. Gentleman will be well aware of the parallel that I must draw. The approach we have adopted is similar to one with which the House is familiar in respect of social security legislation, where most of the detailed provisions governing the administration are set out in regulations. Over the years, that has generally been thought to be sensible.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): It should be said that hon. Members are becoming familiar with the procedure precisely because the present Government have taken such action repeatedly. Other Governments—including Conservative Governments—have not acted in the same way. The fact that so many important decisions will be left to regulation and discretion after the House has dealt with the primary legislation, rather than being contained in that legislation, represents a major flaw in the Bill.

Mr. Newton: I invite the hon. Gentleman to look at some of the social security legislation that was passed while he was a Social Security Minister—or, at least, under the Government in which he was a Social Security Minister. He will find that there is nothing new about the general pattern that I have described. It has been felt under Governments of all kinds, over most of the period since the war, that this is a sensible way to deal with much of the detail of social security and comparable legislation, especially when it is subject to change.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Secretary of State cannot blame me for any past misdemeanours in this respect——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Lloyd George started it.

Mr. Kirkwood: Lloyd George may well have started it.

I could not agree more with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to expect to be able to present the House—as he so often does nowadays—with Bills from which so much secondary legislation consequentially flows and expect to get away with it. I have said that before. There will come a time, I believe, when the House will throw some of this primary legislation back in the right hon. Gentleman's face—and so it should.

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. I note also that he fell somewhat short of giving a clear undertaking on behalf of his party—for whatever that would be worth——

Mr. Kirkwood: What a swingeing attack.

Mr. Newton: It is not a swingeing attack; it is merely a light-hearted comment, addressed to an hon. Member for whom I have considerable respect. I hope that I have not ruined his chances in the Scottish borders by attempting to be nice to him. If, however, such a thing as a Liberal Democrat Government were ever to appear, I should wait with bated breath for that Government's assurance that no social security legislation would include any powers for secondary legislation.

I intend shortly to provide a note for hon. Members, explaining in fuller detail the intentions behind the provisions that will determine the way in which the regulation-making powers are used. I hope that that will be useful in informing discussion at later stages if the Bill is given its Second Reading. That does not, of course, go as far as the hon. Member for Oldham, West or the hon. Gentleman from the Borders—whose constituency I always find it difficult to remember, because it is such a long name—would like; nevertheless, I trust that they will consider it at least a constructive response to the points that they have raised.

The opening clauses of the Bill set out the basic principles in terms of what might be called the "usual case". By that I mean only that it is what most often happens: a man and a woman have a family, their own relationship breaks up and the woman is left with the care of the children. Although, in discussing the Bill, we shall probably need to use language that reflects that "usual case", we should of course acknowledge that roles are sometimes reversed. Of more than 1 million lone parents, however, only about 10 per cent. are men, and I therefore think it reasonable to use the lone mother as our starting point—although the Bill applies equally to lone fathers who are caring for their children.

The Bill establishes that the absent parent has a duty to maintain the children of the relationship, and that that duty may be discharged by the making of periodic payments fixed by the Bill. It also contains a power for regulations to be made covering precisely how the formula will apply to cases that diverge from the "usual case"—for example, a case in which the child is looked after by a third party and there are therefore two absent parents, or the care of the child is shared between both parents.

Child maintenance is not, in the general case, a public debt, but a private liability owed to the child and the person caring for him. We therefore intend the services of the new Child Support Agency to be available to all parties where child maintenance is an issue—apart from a relatively small number of cases, to which I shall refer later, which will remain for the courts' discretion. Parties will continue to be able to make private arrangements about child maintenance, but if they want to use the services of the agency instead they will be able to. In those cases, fees will, where appropriate, be charged for voluntary use of the agency's services.

As we have always made clear, there are particular considerations where the lone parent is in receipt of social security income-related benefits. A responsibility which should be borne, at least in part, by the absent parent is being picked up by taxpayers instead. We therefore believe that, in general, lone parents on benefit should be expected to co-operate in using the services of the agency to trace the absent parent and recover maintenance from him. That is the purpose of clause 6.

Clause 6 has been the focus of much discussion in another place. Indeed, the other place removed an associated clause designed to secure that, when a lone parent unreasonably failed to co-operate, a sanction could be applied by way of a reduction in her own personal allowance in her benefit payment. We have listened carefully to the arguments, and, as my noble Friend Lord Henley said in another place on 16 May, we are continuing to explore ways in which we might more fully describe the circumstances in which the obligation to co-operate in clause 6 would not apply.

In our view, that is best achieved not by a list of the kind that some have urged us to adopt, but by a more general definition that focuses on adverse consequences that could be held likely to occur if an application for maintenance proceeds, and on assessing the likelihood—which we expect to arise only rarely—of the parent with care, or her children, suffering distress or harm because she is required to co-operate. Expressing that in legislative terms will be a difficult drafting task, but we hope to present an amendment in Committee.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Secretary of State has said that he is listening carefully to the arguments, and that he will table an amendment. Will he be confident enough to allow the House a free vote on whether to accept it?

Mr. Newton: I have, I think, made it clear that the Government regard this as an important point of principle in establishing the Bill's general objectives. I do not, therefore, expect to be able to respond to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in quite so friendly a fashion as I did to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

In view of some of the concern that has been expressed, it is particularly important to be clear about some aspects of the way in which the agency will work. In particular, it will be able to act as a buffer between the parents. It is the agency that will approach the absent parent and assess his ability to pay maintenance, and set up arrangements for payment. If necessary, it will collect on behalf of the parent with care, and will take enforcement action. I strongly emphasise that there need be no direct contact between the parents if they do not wish it, and that there will be no question of the agency's passing on confidential information, such as the family's whereabouts, to the absent parent.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): First, let me say how much I welcome the Bill. Secondly, let me say how glad I am that my right hon. Friend has decided to locate the child support agencies throughout the United Kingdom, not just in London.

My right hon. Friend will, however, be aware of the disappointment that I feel about the announcement of the siting of the agencies, and the fact that there will not be one in Wolverhampton. Will he take this opportunity to put the record straight? I know that he has tried his very best: he has telephoned me late at night many times—*[Laughter.]*—to ask my advice about Wolverhampton's difficulty in providing premises.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): A likely story.

Mrs. Hicks: Jealousy, jealousy.

Wolverhampton had difficulty in providing premises in which to locate the agency. As I know of my right hon. Friend's commitment, I am disappointed to read today in the local paper that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) has already damned the Government for turning their back on Wolverhampton. I know for a fact that the local Labour council could not come up with a site. I ask my right hon. Friend to put the record straight.

Mr. Newton: This is another matter to which I had intended to come later in my speech—and I will do so. I am happy to confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) and I have had a number of conversations about the matter, both on the telephone and in other ways, because of the very proper way in which she has vigorously sought to represent the interests of her constituency in respect of siting one of the agency offices. I share her disappointment that it has not been possible to respond in the way in which I should have liked to respond to her representations on the matter. She will be aware that our proposal for the siting of one of the proposed agency offices is well within the area in which recruitment in Wolverhampton would be a possibility. We will seek to encourage that.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): My right hon. Friend is spelling out the details of his proposal with the skill and sensitivity that the House has come to expect of him. He confirmed a few moments ago that the mechanisms and proposals would apply to the minority of cases, some of which have been raised with me by constituents. In such cases, it is the father who has been left as the lone parent and the mother, unusually but with developing social pressures, who has abandoned her children. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he is confident that the mechanisms will work in that minority of cases? Have he and his Department studied the practice in other countries that have similar systems to ensure that we can learn from them how to make our system most effective?

Mr. Newton: The answer to all three parts of my hon. Friend's question is yes. The first question was whether the arrangements would apply even-handedly, and the answer is yes. Secondly, he asked whether I am confident that the arrangements will work as effectively in what I have called "absent mother" cases as in "absent father" cases. The answer to that is yes. Thirdly, he asked whether we had studied the experience in other countries—notably, I must mention, Australia and some parts of the United States. The answer to that is yes. In many respects, our proposals represent an improvement, not least in connection with the points with which my hon. Friend is concerned, as a result of the lessons that we have drawn from that study.

I hope that I have left no doubt of our wish to ensure that there should be proper definition of the circumstances in which the obligation to co-operate will not apply. However, we remain convinced that, when lone parents do not have reasonable grounds for refusing to co-operate —in other words, when they are, in effect, simply choosing to pass the bill to the community at large—it is right that there should be some limited sanction in respect of their personal allowance in the benefit system—although not, of course, in respect of any benefit payable in respect of the children. We have carefully considered the points made in another place when the provision was removed from the Bill. However, we believe that an important principle is involved, so we propose to seek the restoration of such a power.

I must emphasise that there will be no question of any reduction in benefit until there has been the most thorough consideration of the reasons for the parent's refusal to seek maintenance for her child. A parent with care of the child who believes that she has good reason not to authorise the recovery of maintenance will have a full opportunity to make her case. She will then be given time to reflect and to make further representations before the issues are considered by a different child support officer—a review within the agency.

Only if at that second stage it is still considered that the mother does not have reasonable grounds for her refusal will there be any question of a reduction in her benefit. She will then still have the right of appeal to an independent child support appeal tribunal. We shall table the necessary amendments in Committee which—I must make this clear because I am responding to one specific concern raised in another place—will include a time limit on the duration of any reduction.

It may be convenient at this point to refer to clause 39.

Mr. Meacher: Can the Secretary of State tell the House why, a month after clause 22 was deleted in another place, the Government still have not come up with a clear formula to insert in the Bill their decision on this point? The right hon. Gentleman referred a few minutes ago to consultations. He will know that every organisation is opposed to the reintroduction of a deduction of benefit for this purpose. It is perfectly clear from what he has just said that the Government have made up their mind, irrespective of any consultations. I ask again why the Secretary of State has come to the House so unprepared that he cannot produce the formula for the House to examine.

Mr. Newton: Two separate points are involved. The point that he has raised goes back to what I was saying about clause 6—that is, whether we can find a way in which to insert material into the Bill which will more fully express the definition of the circumstances in which a judgment will be made about whether a refusal is reasonable. I thought that I had already said enough to show that, although the matter is clear in general layman's terms—what we seek to achieve, for example, in cases in which there is good reason to believe that distress or harm may be caused by the pursuit of maintenance—there is a difficult drafting problem. I am anxious, as is the parliamentary draftsman, to ensure that the point is considered as fully and carefully as possible before it is included in the Bill.

There is a somewhat separate point about the circumstances and arrangements under which whatever grounds are in the Bill, or in any other form, are then considered, and about the procedures that are gone through before any question of a deduction arises. I am concentrating on those points at the moment, and I hope that that is reasonably clear.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for displaying his characteristic courtesy. I should be pleased if he would accept my apologies for my failing to be here for the first

few minutes of his speech. I must inform the House that a large engineering company in my constituency is facing closure, and I had to speak to people who are directly threatened. That is why I was away from the Chamber.

I have a serious question for the Secretary of State—I have no wish to score so-called "party political" points on the matter. Clause 7(1) uses the words:

"In Scotland, a child
(a) who is a qualifying child; and
(b) who is not a pupil".

When the clause was framed, was cognisance taken of the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Bill, which is at present passing through the other place? That Bill removes the distinction between a pupil and a child. On that technical question, at what age can someone representing a child in Scotland who is a non-pupil seek assistance in these matters?

Mr. Newton: By that curious process of osmosis which sometimes enables information to reach Ministers—that is, by a nod from a quarter to which I am not allowed to refer—I am already informed that the answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. The Bill takes account of the measure to which he referred.

I am at a somewhat greater disadvantage on the second part of the hon. Member's question. The right course for me to take is to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, who will reply at the end of the debate, will seek to deal with the point. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Rather than attempt to digest in these circumstances what may be a complicated piece of information, which I have just been handed, I shall ensure that the matter is covered later in the debate.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The Bill's focus on the child, rather than parental needs, as the priority is welcome. With regard to such matters as naming the father, I remind the House that the Secretary of State is giving an identity to the child in need. That is what the children of lone parents, where fathers or mothers do not pay maintenance, tell me is missing. They feel rootless and without identity when the missing parent does not pay for their support. Therefore, I support the Bill and the naming of the missing parent wherever that is feasible and practical.

Mr. Newton: In many cases, that is indeed an important perspective.

I was about to refer to clause 39. I have said that we do not think it right that the parent with care should be able just to choose to pass responsibility for the children to the taxpayer. The same argument applies in principle to absent parents: their responsibility needs to be recognised. For that reason, even if the absent parent is on benefit, we think that, in general, he should at least make a small contribution to meeting his maintenance liability. This would be by a deduction from his benefit at the same level as those which can currently be made, for example, to meet arrears on various bills, and within the existing limits for such deductions. I look particularly at the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe when I say that, where the absent parent is sick or disabled, or has dependent children, liability will be established, but the contribution will be zero-rated.

We believe that, in general, equity and consistency can be brought to child maintenance by an objective formula. There has been much support, both inside and outside the House, for that. But we recognise that there will be situations where this does not apply, and I therefore draw the House's attention briefly to clause 8, which deals with the remaining jurisdiction of the courts. It provides a "principle of mutual exclusivity"; where maintenance may be sought under the formula, it cannot be sought from the courts, but the classes of case covered by the Bill are more limited than those currently covered by the courts, so existing court powers will continue to apply to cases not covered by the new scheme—for example, those involving stepchildren, where the court would need to decide whether the child was, in fact, treated as a child of the family and therefore eligible for an award of maintenance.

The courts will also retain jurisdiction to cover some elements of maintenance not covered by the formula. The first of these is the child's right to share in higher levels of income. The operation of the formula will be limited at the upper end to prevent excessively high payments of maintenance becoming due, but the courts will be able to award maintenance over and above any formula assessment. The courts will also have a top-up power allowing them to make an order in addition to the normal formula award, for education costs, which are not covered by the formula.

Thirdly—I look even more closely at the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe—in response to arguments which have suggested that special allowance needed to be made for disabled children, we have concluded that the courts should have a power to make discretionary additional awards in such cases also, and we plan to introduce an amendment to provide for that.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Secretary of State aware that Mencap has said that the Government may decide to take all families with disabled children out of the new system and leave them with the courts, and that Mencap is resisting the suggestion? To what extent is the right hon. Gentleman consulting Mencap and other organisations which take a particular interest in the question?

Mr. Newton: Both before and, more especially, since the publication of "Children Come First" last autumn, we have received many representations, including some from Mencap, I am sure, as well as from a wide range of child care and other organisations. We have taken, and continue to take, those representations very much into account in working out what use should be made of the secondary powers to which reference has already been made.

Certainly, if Mencap wishes to make further representations along the lines suggested by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, I undertake that they will be considered, although I hope that what I have just announced goes some way to meeting their concern. Certainly it was intended to do so.

Mr. Harry Ewing: I have been listening carefully to the Secretary of State, and many of the provisions of the Bill are about the enforcement of child maintenance orders. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell me whether the Army Acts lay down that a commanding officer of a serving soldier has the right to set aside a court maintenance order it he thinks that the man concerned does not have enough income to meet it?

Is the Secretary of State aware that I have been dealing with a constituency case in which the sheriff court in Falkirk made a child maintenance order but, because the

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absent parent happens to be a serving soldier, his commanding officer has time and again set aside the court order, and there is nothing that the mother of the two children concerned can do about it?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will understand if I say that, rather than attempt to comment now—apart from anything else, that would entail my knowing more about a specific case than I could conceivably pretend to here and now—I shall undertake to look into the matter and write to the hon. Gentleman. I should be grateful if he would provide me with the necessary identifying details, if he has not already done so. I suspect that such a case is best looked into specifically rather than commented on in general terms.

Clauses 10 and 11 deal with maintenance assessments and the basis on which they are to be made. Clause 10 gives effect to schedule 1, where the detailed structure of the formula is set out. I should perhaps say—wryly—that the algebraic form in which it appears seemed to offer advantages of conciseness and clarity, but I am not sure that it is entirely transparent, so it may be convenient to remind hon. Members of the main features of the formula.

There are four elements. The first is the maintenance requirement. That is the minimum amount which all parents will be required to contribute to the maintenance of their child if they can afford to. It represents the weekly cost of maintaining each child, based on allowances in the income support scheme.

The second element is the exempt income, which is worked out for each responsible parent. It represents the parents' own personal essential expenses which must be met before any maintenance at all is paid. The starting point, again, is the allowances in the income support scheme, plus—this is important—reasonable housing costs and the costs of any other natural children for whom parents are liable and who are living with them. The exempt income produced by this calculation will then be deducted from net income—income after tax and national insurance—producing as a result what we have called assessable income—net income minus exempt income—which will then be used to calculate how much maintenance is to be paid. Exempt income does not include allowances for any new partner because that would mean an adult taking priority over children.

The third element is the deduction rate applied to the assessable income to determine the minimum amount of maintenance to be paid. Until the maintenance requirement is met, the proposition is that assessable income will be shared equally between the qualifying children and the parent. After that, until a further ceiling is reached above which the formula will not apply, a lower rate will have effect. We have been giving much thought to what this should be, and have listened with particular care to comments made in another place.

The White Paper suggested for illustrative purposes a rate, above that minimum level, of 15 per cent. It is clearly right that the deduction rate at that stage should be lower. That reflects the normal reality that, at higher levels of income, a lower proportion of the total is likely to be spent on the children. But we nevertheless agree that it should still represent a significant contribution to the maintenance of children, and, while we are still considering the precise details of the additional element which will be needed in the formula, I can say that it is likely to be more than 15 per cent., as has been pressed on us from a number of quarters.

The fourth element is protected income. This will also be set by reference to income support rates, but with a margin above them in order not to discourage absent parents from working or provide a stimulus to default. It will produce an income level which no person liable to maintain a child will be allowed to fall below as a result of meeting both maintenance obligations and the essential expenses of himself and his new family.

The formula is thus very flexible. It deals with the circumstances of the parties as they are, and it adapts to changes in those circumstances. Indeed, the proposals for periodic review are a significant innovation. The formula also deals specifically with the housing circumstances of the parties, and reflects the financial consequences of any property settlement which may be made, or may have been made. Hon. Members and certainly the hon. Member for Birkenhead will know that the Social Security Select Committee has commented on this aspect, and we are, of course, considering carefully the points that it has made.

As I said, the courts will be able to award an additional amount to provide for disabled children. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe is still here, although he has moved his position. I am coming to another point which will be of interest to him. We have also given thought to how to provide for cases where one or more of the adults involved incurs extra costs as a result of a disability. We have decided that in such cases we shall include in the exempt or protected income the various disability-related premiums which would be payable if income support were claimed.

We shall also disregard as income the allowances which would be ignored if income support were payable. That will mean that a parent with a disability will still be assessed for maintenance but will receive an income advantage over a non-disabled adult. That income advantage will exactly equal the value of the premiums and allowances which recognise the person's need in respect of a disability. All our evidence suggests—I believe that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe will agree—that people with disabilities want account to be taken of their disabilities, as the allowances and premiums seek to do, but otherwise wish to be treated like everyone else. Therefore, we believe that what I have outlined is the right approach.

Mr. Alfred Morris *indicated assent.*

Mr. Newton: I am glad to see the right hon. Gentleman nodding.

The formula is the basis on which full assessments will be made, but in some cases the agency may not have all the information that it needs to effect a full assessment—perhaps because one of the parties is being deliberately difficult. The Bill therefore allows for an enforceable interim assessment to be made in those cases. That is designed to assist in obtaining early payment of maintenance. It should also act as an incentive for the liable parent to provide information.

The bulk of the remaining clauses in the Bill provide for the powers which the Child Support Agency will need if it is to do its job effectively. Undoubtedly, those powers will

receive a good deal of consideration in Committee, so this afternoon I shall simply outline some of the major features.

Miss Emma Nicholson: On the earlier point, will my right hon. Friend assure me that the exempt income—the income kept back for the absent parent—will be only the income essential for the upkeep of the parent? Even the existence of that exempt income puts the child second. In the child's mind, surely the child is the priority and should always come first.

Mr. Newton: The immediate and obvious answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes, but in one sense it begs what will undoubtedly be the subject of further discussion—precisely what is essential and inessential. If we are both allowed to beg that question for the moment, the answer to my hon. Friend's question is undoubtedly yes.

Clause 12 creates officers to be known as child support officers. All staff of the Child Support Agency will be officers of the Child Support Agency and as such civil servants in the Department of Social Security. But in applying the formula to make decisions about how much maintenance individuals are to pay, they will be acting under the statutory authority of this Bill, independent of the political process; that is why, just as individual decisions are made in the benefit system by independent adjudication officers, so in the Child Support Agency, decisions will be made by statutorily independent child support officers. There will also be an independent appeal system, about which I shall say more in a few moments.

The practical work involved under the new scheme will be done by a Child Support Agency. I have announced previously that we hope to have the agency up and running early in 1993. I am pleased to confirm that we seem on course for the agency to begin operations by spring of 1993 with work being taken on in a phased way thereafter. The agency will be a next steps agency accountable to Parliament through me. My Department is already much involved in work to recover maintenance from people known in the trade—as some hon. Members will be aware—as liable relatives. Apart from using my Department's experience in dealing with complex questions about people's income and circumstances, it is sensible for the Child Support Agency to build on the Department's specific expertise in liable relative work. Indeed, we have some 2,500 posts assigned to that work already, out of the total staffing of the Child Support Agency, which we currently expect to amount to about 4,700.

I shall now answer some of the points made in interventions about locations.

Mr. Frank Field: The Secretary of State said that he had 2,400 posts in the liable relative section of his Department. How many people occupy those posts?

Mr. Newton: The people are there. The issue is to what extent they do liable relative work or whether under certain circumstances they are diverted to other tasks within the Benefits Agency. That might as well be openly acknowledged, because it is well known by several hon. Members. One of the advantages of the proposals that we are making, as well as of the measures already in effect to create a Contributions Agency alongside the Benefits Agency, is that there is a degree of what is called, in the jargon of the trade, ring fencing of the resource for that particular purpose.

Mr. Kirkwood: This is an important question. Can the Secretary of State estimate how much money the liable relative section generates at present from liable parents?

Mr. Newton: Yes. The amount has increased substantially as a result of the extra effort that has been made and, indeed, the deployment of additional staff resources in the past couple of years. The figure is substantially in excess of £200 million a year. However, I am not in a position to give the hon. Gentleman an exact estimate of the outturn in the year which has just ended. If the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde, can assist the hon. Gentleman further when he replies to the debate, I am sure that he will do so.

The total staffing of the Child Support Agency will amount to some 4,700. A significant proportion of those staff will be grouped in six centres in various parts of the country where they will do the bulk of processing and assessment work which does not require face-to-face contact with the customer. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) mentioned, we have said in a parliamentary answer that the Department is currently negotiating for centres in Hastings, Belfast, Falkirk, Birkenhead, Plymouth and the Dudley area in the black country.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The Secretary of State may be aware that I have campaigned for years for civil service jobs to be located in Falkirk. Although I have grave reservations about the Bill because it will do virtually nothing to give additional support to single parents or to children, I welcome the Government's recognition that Callendar Park is an excellent location for civil service jobs. I look forward to the location in Falkirk of more meaningful civil service jobs in genuine child welfare, social security, and, indeed, overseas development, for which I have campaigned for some time.

Mr. Newton: I can best respond by saying that I am glad at least to have created a dilemma for the hon. Gentleman and to have attracted probably his first reasonably friendly comments in a decade to a Conservative Social Security Minister.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): My right hon. Friend must accept the thanks not only of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and myself, but of those of our many constituents who work at Ashdown house in Hastings for his willingness to consider those premises as part of his plans and to negotiate for their use. I just hope that the Property Services Agency proves to be sensible and realistic in those negotiations.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in November 1989, I wrote to the Department of the Environment asking it to circulate all other Government Departments with the details of Ashdown house and the qualifications of the staff with the sort of eventuality that my right hon. Friend now envisages in mind? I hope that that practice becomes a precedent whenever a Government Department vacates premises in the hope that it can be used by another Government Department.

Mr. Newton: I pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), who is unwell and, unhappily, is unable to be here today. My hon. Friends, in common with my hon. Friend the Member for

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Wolverhampton, North-East, have vigorously and properly represented the interests of their constituents in this matter. From their point of view, I am glad that a successful outcome has been reached, as we are now negotiating for the use of the premises in Hastings.

Mr. Harry Ewing: I am retiring at the next election and, in my usual generous manner, I can afford to give all the credit to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) for attracting the jobs to Falkirk. I share my hon. Friend's reservations about the Bill, but I welcome those jobs with open arms. If ever an area needed new jobs and a broadened economic base, it is Falkirk. I know that the right hon. Gentleman has tremendous influence with his Cabinet colleagues and if he could persuade each one of them to give me a gift of 500 jobs before I retire, I will leave this place a happy man.

Mr. Newton: I am almost overwhelmed by the encomiums that are being heaped upon me by the Opposition. I am duly grateful for the generosity with which the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has spoken.

As a number of hon. Friends have said, the six centres that we plan to locate around the country depend to some degree on the successful passage of the Bill. I should also make it clear that the agency will also have a presence on the ground, more locally, consisting of trained staff who will conduct interviews, visit customers, pursue inquiries locally and offer advice and guidance about the agency's services. I anticipate that, normally, those staff will be co-located with the Benefits Agency officers, as that will probably be for everyone's convenience.

In making assessments, the agency will need certain sorts of information—particularly relating to the financial and family circumstances of the parties. The Bill provides for this, subject to strict specifications about what information may be required for the purpose, and to rigorous controls over what information may be disclosed, in strictly limited circumstances, by the officers of the agency. We intend that, in cases where information about parties' incomes is not forthcoming from their employer after every other avenue has been tried, officers of the agency will have access to powers similar to those of officers of my Department who inspect premises in connection with national insurance matters.

Clause 14, as it stands, is the basis of the provision we seek, but, in the light of concerns expressed in another place, we shall table amendments to make explicit that the powers referred to are to be used only when specifically authorised on my behalf in particular difficult cases.

In addition to the provision for assessments to be automatically reviewed at regular intervals to which I have already referred, it is essential to provide for a right of appeal where any of the parties to an assessment made by the agency has reason to question it. The detailed provisions for this were added to the Bill during its passage in another place. At a first stage, the Bill provides that the parties may ask for the assessment to be looked at again, within the Child Support Agency, so as to provide a quick and relatively informal way of putting mistakes right. That first-stage review will be done by a different officer from the one who made the original decision.

Appeals from that process will go to specialist dedicated tribunals, along the lines of those which hear appeals against decisions of social security adjudication. Further appeals on points of law will go to specialist commissioners and thence to the Court of Appeal. Where the matter at issue is whether the alleged liable parent is in fact the father, the question will go, as now, to the courts for determination.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When a reduced benefit direction is issued, will the decision on the amount and duration of that deduction be decided by the child support officer or by the existing DSS adjudication officer?

Mr. Newton: We shall seek to give fuller definition to the circumstances in which that may occur. In the legislation, we expect to define the nature and duration of the deduction that would be made in particular circumstances. The decision about whether a deduction was appropriate would be taken by the child support officer following the review and the reconsideration that I outlined earlier. That decision will be subject to an appeal to the child support appeal tribunal. At that point, however, it would simply be a fact that the Benefits Agency would take into account in determining the appropriate rate of benefit. That is our thinking on the matter at this stage, and I hope that it is reasonably clear.

The remaining substantial group of clauses in the Bill deal with the collection and enforcement of assessments. The House will be aware that the Maintenance Enforcement Bill now before Parliament seeks to improve the efficiency with which maintenance orders are collected and enforced by the courts by giving them a wider range of powers to order particular methods of payment when the order is made or dealt with. That reform, which, subject to parliamentary approval, will come into effect quite quickly, will be a valuable improvement to the present system.

In framing the proposals for collection and enforcement under this new system, we have been guided by two principles. The first is that the Child Support Agency should have wide powers to come to arrangements about the payment of maintenance which suit all parties and which give reasonable assurance that payments will actually be made. As a general rule, our preferred method will be the least intrusive one possible—that is, an arrangement between the parties. Where that presents problems, however, it will be possible for payments to be made by a range of methods, including cash payments at local offices, cheque, bank transfer, or standing order. It will be possible for the agency to make orders deducting money at source from a liable person's earnings where that appears the best way in which to secure payments. Very importantly, especially in view of one point in the reasoned amendment tabled by the Opposition, the existing arrangements whereby caring parents on income support can have their benefit paid gross will continue as now. In those cases, the agency will take responsibility for recovering maintenance.

The second guiding principle has been that enforcement provisions should mirror those at present available for maintenance debt. Where the normal range of payment methods—including deductions from earnings—has failed, the agency will be able to apply to a magistrates court for a liability order which will permit the distraint of the liable person's goods to meet the debt. It is our

intention that the Bill will contain powers for the agency to apply, in the usual way, to the county court for garnishee and charging orders whereby money can be recovered, for example, from a liable person's bank account and from other third parties who in turn owe him money, or by a charge on the liable person's property, to meet the debt.

As a last resort, the Bill contains a power under which the agency may apply to a magistrates court for a warrant committing a liable person to prison if his failure to pay is due to wilful refusal or culpable neglect. That sanction, already available under current law for maintenance default, will be used very rarely, as it is now, and only where the court is satisfied that the debtor has the means to pay but simply refuses to do so.

Dr. Godman: It seems under clause 35 that the Government are authorising warrant sales, or the poinding process, yet are not anxious to initiate wage arrestment orders in such cases. It is important to note that clause 26 is concerned with the power of the Secretary of State for Scotland to initiate or defend actions of declarator. Will the Minister confirm that, under clause 26(1)(c)—remembering the relationship of all this to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990, which allows for, among other things, DNA testing in certain civil cases—a DNA test could be imposed on a person who claimed not to be the parent of the child in question?

Mr. Newton: Despite the years I have spent dealing with social security matters, I am reluctant to pretend to have comparable experience with the detailed provisions of Scottish law. I will remit the hon. Gentleman's question to my hon. Friend, who may answer when replying to the debate. Otherwise, one of us will write to him on what sounds like a complicated and technical point.

Mr. Allen: I have an easier question for the right hon. Gentleman. Where a benefit reduction order is placed against a person's income support and an appeal is launched immediately, will the benefit reduction order be operative immediately, or will it be suspended until the appeal process has been exhausted? If the benefit were reduced immediately, the person concerned would suffer great hardship in the interim because of a decision which should not have been taken in the first place.

Mr. Newton: I would expect the arrangements in that respect to be parallel with those in the most obviously roughly comparable example of voluntary unemployment deductions, where normally the deduction would not go into effect until the appeal had been heard, as it were, and overturned at that stage. We can discuss the point further in Committee, but that is what I would envisage, according to our present thinking.

Most of the clauses to which I have not referred cover matters of technical detail, with which I will not weary the House at this stage.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): The right hon. Gentleman's answer to a question I have could help me in winding up, and some of my hon. Friends in their consideration of the issues involved.

What consideration is being given to private arrangements that are made between couples where, for example, the man—it might be the woman, but usually it is the man—has left the other spouse in the matrimonial home with the children but pays no maintenance by arrangement? Often the man in such a case will pay no maintenance, because he may not be able to pay it, but will have the child every weekend and often in the school holidays. What consideration is being given to such private arrangements? Will they be liable to the law when they are working well and the child is being maintained, albeit not in the way in which the Bill suggests?

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Lady heard the recognition I gave earlier to the recent interim report of the Select Committee which dealt with some of those points and to which I said we were giving consideration. I hope it is clear that the formula takes substantial account of such circumstances because of the inclusion of reasonable housing costs. To put the point at its simplest, if the absent parent has assigned interest in the matrimonial home, other things being equal, his own reasonable housing costs will now be significantly higher than they would otherwise have been, and that will be taken into account, because his reasonable housing costs will be allowed for. That will then be reflected, in effect, in reducing the amount of maintenance that he could be expected to pay, because his reasonable housing costs will be taken into account first.

The matter is not as simple as it has been presented in some quarters. I acknowledge that the hon. Lady will wish to comment on the subject in winding up. We shall examine carefully any points that she makes, as we shall look carefully at the report of the Select Committee. The formula seems to take account of such arrangements to a substantial extent. I hope that that gives the hon. Lady help in devising her winding-up speech. I am in a very helpful mood this afternoon.

The Bill reforms a difficult and fragmented area of legal provision which has clearly been failing to secure the interests of children. It is based on the clear principle of ensuring, so far as we can, that parents fulfil their responsibilities to their children. It is designed to bring consistency, certainty and reliability to the financial arrangements which are one important reflection of those responsibilities. Alongside the Children Act, it is a substantial step forward in protecting the interests of children, and I commend it to the House.

5.55 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, while providing that absent parents should contribute to the support of their children, leaves lone parents on Income Support not one penny better off, makes lone parents worse off where they receive maintenance just above Income Support levels and thus lose access to passported benefits, allows maintenance payments to be disrupted if the absent parent defaults, does not take account of property settlements which could lead to an increase in orders for the home to be sold, leaves unclear in which cases the lone parent will be exempt from the requirement to help the agency trace the absent parent and therefore from the penalty of loss of benefit imposed on the caring parent, and does not tackle more serious problems facing lone parents and their children, notably the provision of better child care facilities."

The Opposition strongly support the principle that absent parents should, within their means, contribute to the support of their children. Indeed, one might have assumed that that principle commanded universal acceptance. It is sad, if also ironic, that the one exception seems to be the Secretary of State's Department.

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

The Government are flaunting the demand that every absent father shall be forced to pay maintenance on pain of attachment of earnings or loss of benefit and that every mother on income support shall be forced to name the father or lose a sizeable chunk of the only income she has. It is sobering to discover that under the Conservatives the Department of Social Security has presided over a 50 per cent. cut in the proportion of children on benefit receiving maintenance.

That did not happen by accident. Both the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, which were moved to examine the issue, put the blame explicitly on DSS neglect. Indeed, they could hardly do otherwise. The DSS had actually reduced the staff devoted to the collection of child maintenance by one third during the 1980s. So although the number of lone parents on benefit doubled, the DSS collected 9 per cent. less in real terms in 1988-89 than in 1981-82. That was why public expenditure on benefit for those children nearly tripled in real terms. The National Audit Office was clear that it was deliberate Government policy and said in its document, "Support for Lone Parent Families":

"The National Audit Office found that among their representative sample of 42 local offices, the practice of transferring staff—

to which the Secretary of State referred—

"from liable relatives work to help with other pressing tasks was widespread during the period examined. In 88 per cent. of the offices in the sample, staff were withdrawn from this work to help undertake work of higher priority. Seventeen of the offices in the sample were more than 25 per cent. below their complement for liable relatives work; seven had shortfalls of over 50 per cent."

The Public Accounts Committee was clearer still and condemned the Government outright. It said in its document, "Support for Lone Parent Families:

"One of the main factors contributing to the steady decline in the number of lone parent families on supplementary benefit or income support also receiving maintenance has been the parallel reduction since 1981 in the resources devoted to liable relatives work by Department of Social Security local offices."

It went on:

"We consider that their neglect of this important area of local office activity was regrettable."

That was in the modest language of civil service comment.

That drift and neglect through the 1980s was interrupted only when, on new year's day 1990, the Labour party published a consultation paper proposing new procedures to enforce maintenance orders. Apparently, it shamed the Government into action. I say that because that was the opinion of a thoroughly independent source —the *Daily Mail*—which considered the Opposition's proposals important enough to give them the front page lead on that day. Two paragraphs are worth quoting. It said that Tory Back Benchers

"fear the Government will be caught on the hop by Labour promises to hunt down the fathers. Opposition social security spokesman Michael Meacher has said Labour's next election manifesto will include a scheme to improve the legal and tax systems to help single mothers claim cash from their former partners".

The *Daily Mail* also said:

"But the Government has no plans to make them pay, Whitehall admitted yesterday".

That is a significant statement coming from that source.

Thus the Government were condemned by the auditors of public expenditure for giving child maintenance contributions too low a priority and by their most loyalist tabloid poodle for being caught on the hop. However, it had its effect because three weeks later it prompted the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), to make a speech which included the statement:

"No father should be able to escape from his responsibilities".

One might have expected that, at long last, the Department for Social Security would then have allotted the enforcement of child maintenance collection the priority that everyone else agreed it should have. It is somewhat dismaying to learn that even the former Prime Minister's admonition still has not made the DSS act in line with the principle that it is proclaiming so loudly today. It is still true that, even when introducing the White Paper last October, which roundly declared that all fathers should be made to pay up, the DSS was still thoroughly laid back about the whole exercise.

In a parliamentary question on 25 February this year I asked about the number of staff days allocated for liable relatives' work in each DSS region in the last nine months of last year—precisely the period when the Government were promoting the White Paper—and what proportion of the days allocated for that work was actually used. I was told that not one region used as much as three quarters of the days allocated for that work and that one—London south—used less than half.

Although the central principle enunciated in the Bill is undoubtedly excellent—the Opposition have already shown their support for it—it would be helpful if the Department of Social Security acted as though it also believed it, because it has still not done so. We are concerned that the Bill is still flawed in several of its applications.

By far the most important is the punitive approach to mothers who refuse to name the absent parent. Clause 22 of the original Bill, which enabled the Department to withdraw benefit from the lone parent if she failed to co-operate, was rightly deleted in another place. The biggest question that the Secretary of State needs to answer today is whether he intends to reintroduce a benefit deduction as a sanction on the mother to comply. Having listened to him for an hour, it is clear that he intends to do so. It is extraordinary that, a month after clause 22 was deleted, the Government—despite all the consultations about which they talk—have still not come up with a formula. That is a deplorable admission to make to the House today.

The Opposition's view is clear. There are several reasons why that course should be vigorously opposed. One is that it is impossible for a deduction in family income of 20 per cent. of the adult personal allowance —I remind the House that that comes to £7·93 per week at current rates—to be carried out without harming the child. In some cases, it might lead to children being taken into care because the mother could no longer afford to look after them. That alone should be a decisive reason for not reintroducing that benefit reduction. Another reason is that there are a number of circumstances—other than rape or incest, which were mentioned in the original White Paper—such as domestic violence or child abuse, where the pursuit of maintenance could damage the child. Those may be covered by the formula at which the Secretary of State hinted today. A third important reason, however, is that only a very small proportion of mothers refuse to

name the father of their child. Lord Henley has already admitted in another place that the benefit savings will be extremely small. He said:

"I would be the first to admit that the benefit savings will be insignificant".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 March 1991; Vol. 527, c. 544.]

In that case, why reintroduce the clause? Why penalise a tiny number of mothers and children who have reason not to name the father when the gains to the Government are "insignificant"? That is exactly the argument used by all the relevant organisations in their letter to *The Times* today, of which I have a copy. They are unanimous in their support of that principle, which is why the question of consultation is so bogus.

If the Treasury has been so dominant over the Bill as to secure and demand the reintroduction of that clause, the Secretary of State, who is a polite and generous person, has been pretty feeble in defending the interests of his clients. It is a great pity that he cannot be as rude to the Treasury as the shop-worn Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), was yesterday about poor families, whom she accused of going hungry only because they did not shop around and bought the wrong food. She shoots her mouth off about what she patently does not understand, while the Secretary of State, I suspect, understands perfectly well but cannot raise his voice enough to make his presence felt with the Treasury.

Why are the Government so obsessed with punitive measures that will harm children? Why do the Government always give incentives to the rich but punish the poor? Why do they not provide instead an incentive to mothers to co-operate with the Child Support Agency? Why do they not provide a small disregard of maintenance for those on income support? Mothers on income support will not be a penny better off as a result of the enforced collection of maintenance under the Bill. It is curious, but typical, that the Government can afford thousands of pounds as an incentive to make Lord Hanson co-operate, but cannot afford one penny to win the co-operation of vulnerable mothers and children.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman make clear exactly what he means by a small amount? Has he costed the process and would his suggestion be a definite Labour commitment?

Mr. Meacher: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, as there will be an election between now and the full implementation of the Bill—certainly before the Child Support Agency is set up and running—there will be a significant number of changes. We do not believe in a punitive social policy, but we believe in incentives—not only for people who are well off, which is fair enough, but for those members of society who are less well endowed and less privileged. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] We are discussing the Government's Bill—that is what is before the House, and I shall continue to talk about it.

Mr. Newton: That is all very well, but the hon. Gentleman is speaking to a motion which has been formally put on the Order Paper and which contains the proposal to which he has adverted. We are entitled to know whether an income support disregard—the cost of which would run into tens of millions of pounds—is or is not an official Labour party policy commitment. Is it a priority?

Mr. Meacher: Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman was not listening to what I was saying. I said that in our social policy we do not believe in punishing people, but in giving them incentives. He cannot be right in fantasising about the cost because he can have no idea about the level at which the disregard might operate. If one provides a firm base on which the lone parent can build, there is a far greater possibility—particularly in conjunction with other measures to which I shall refer—that as long as his or her children are not very young, the lone parent will be able to get back to work and the cost to the taxpayer in the medium and long run will be less, not more.

The right hon. Gentleman referred vaguely to the formula of harm and distress. In another place, Lord Henley, also referred to it and I shall rehearse to the House the phrase used by Lord Henley about a month ago. He said:

"If we were reasonably satisfied that the consequences might harm or distress the caring parent or her children, or something of that kind, that would be the trigger for the Secretary of State not to require co-operation."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 May 1991; Vol. 528, c. 1777.]

As the Government have not come up with a formula since then, we are entitled to ask for a clear answer to a number of questions because the Government have certainly had long enough to think about it. What exactly is included in the phrase, "harm and distress", particularly as the Minister in the other place also referred to something of that kind? Presumably, the phrase includes domestic violence. But does it include the threat of violence? How will that be proved, particularly if the claim is challenged?

The Public Accounts Committee was certainly aware of the intention of the DSS to increase liable relatives work. It said:

"We recommend too that the Department monitor the way in which this work is undertaken to ensure that the pressure on officers to achieve a substantial increase in maintenance recoveries does not lead to undue pressure being put on lone parents to co-operate in liable relatives work."

How will the Secretary of State avoid undue pressure being brought to bear? Whether we use the formula suggested or another one, there will clearly be a demand from the Treasury and from DSS headquarters to increase maintenance recoveries. How is undue pressure to be avoided?

Does the Secretary of State accept that fine judgments will be required and a heavy burden of responsibility will fall on social security officers in a sphere which, we all understand, is one of intimate and complex human relationships? Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that his officials—fine body of persons though they no doubt are—can exercise that degree of sensitivity, given the experience that we have all had of the social fund in the past three years? If he is satisfied, all I can say is that many of us beg leave to doubt his confidence.

Is giving information for maintenance pursuit a condition of benefit receipt? There seems to be some genuine uncertainty about that. Perhaps we could be told in the wind-up speech whether the Secretary of State will publish revised guidance to DSS officials so that the legal process is made quite clear.

Having expressed our strong opposition both to the right hon. Gentleman's craven retention of benefit

[Mr. Meacher]

deduction as a form of sanction and the specific formula that he seems to have in mind, I turn to the maintenance formula in the Bill, which has several faults. First, it is regressive and does not ensure that those on lower incomes pay least, which we believe is an essential requirement. The absent father of a child under five who earns £120 per week net might, under the formula, typically pay about 27 per cent. of that income, while a father with £350 assessed income—nearly three times as much—would pay a significantly lower proportion at about 21 per cent. The Bill is wrong in that the 15 per cent. illustrative deduction level—I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman says that the figure could well be above 15 per cent., so let us assume that it is about 20 per cent.—for those who can afford more than the basic maintenance bill is clearly insufficient to ensure that the child shares the absent parent's living standards. But surely the philosophy of child maintenance in family law is that it has always contained a relationship to the standard of living that the child would have enjoyed. We strongly object to the fact that the Government are tying maintenance too closely to income support levels.

At the other end of the scale, the Bill is as harsh on low-earner absent parents as it is lax on high earners. If there is to be an incentive to work, the protected income needs to include work-related expenses as well as some significant reward for working, but it does not. If the protected income is not set at a high enough level, many second families may well end up living below the subsistence level of income support—a point that appeared to be lost on the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), and I was surprised that the Secretary of State did not make more of that. Clause 35 deliberately creates that result by requiring absent parents on income support to contribute a proportion—it might be 5 per cent.—of their benefit in maintenance. To impose that on every unemployed father who clearly cannot afford it when, in the past, the DSS has been so negligent in collecting it from those who clearly can afford it surely smacks more of Thatcherite dogmatism than of workable social policy.

We believe that the principles of financial liability towards children should be recognised, but we also believe that the deduction should be zero rated—to use a phrase that is coming into the trade—while the absent father remains on income support. One of the most worrying aspects of the Bill is the way in which it will contribute further to a disturbing proliferation of deductions from benefit. There are already almost half a million claimants who are forced to live below income support subsistence levels due to social fund loan repayments. Some 250,000 are forced to live below those levels because of deductions for gas and electricity arrears, about 50,000 suffer because of poll tax liability orders, and 150,000 suffer because of deductions of pay off rent and water charge arrears. There are also those who are subject to the so-called voluntary unemployment deduction, which operates for up to six months at a time. That accounts for more than 1 million people who are compelled to live below income support levels, and the Secretary of State is adding to the list by including those who will pay deductions for maintenance. The list is far too big already. It should be cut and certainly not be increased.

Enforcement will be crucial to this enterprise, and in that respect the Bill has a number of weaknesses. Deduction from earnings orders can be evaded by changing employment. Payment by the self-employed cannot be ensured when for them deduction from earnings is an inappropriate measure. Surely the simplest, most cost-effective and reliable means of ensuring maintenance for the caring parent would be for the DSS to provide guaranteed maintenance payments. The DSS already does that in some cases, and Sweden and a number of states in the United States operate a guaranteed maintenance system. Why cannot such a system be made available for all lone parents in the United Kingdom? That is the only certain way to ensure that a lone parent who has used increased maintenance as a springboard to return to work will not be forced to give up the job as soon as the absent parent defaults on maintenance.

Why is such a system not in the Bill? I suspect that it is because once again the Bill is not so much about ensuring that lone parents get their maintenance as ensuring that the Treasury gets a reduction in public expenditure.

If the DSS provided guaranteed maintenance payments it would have to be sure that the Bill's enforcement procedures were effective, but they are nowhere near watertight. Child maintenance is thought to be relevant to about 2 million families, and each year our courts handle only 4 per cent. of that total in maintenance enforcement cases. Therefore, the Child Support Agency will have a vast clientele. The only effective instrument of enforcement is the Inland Revenue. Automatic maintenance deductions could be made by changing tax codes, and that would make it much harder for the liable person to avoid payment by switching jobs.

I take no credit for originality, because such a system has been adopted in Australia and has a high level of compliance. Why is it not in the Bill? I suspect that it is because of the inveterate intransigence of the Inland Revenue in refusing to become involved in what it always regards as marginal and messy social policy. I may be wrong about that; if I am the right hon. Gentleman can put me right. Whatever the reason, the failure to use Inland Revenue tax coding, which is the only really effective instrument against evasive fathers who consistently fail to pay or who regularly move both job and home, is a huge gap at the centre of the Bill.

We are concerned about other serious issues in the Bill, but I can deal with them only briefly. I shall mention two. Ministers have argued, perhaps rather curiously, that there is no connection between what happens to the family home and the provisions of the Bill. The Secretary of State said that housing expenditure could be exempt. If the new system does not allow substitution, there will be a real risk that more absent parents will insist on the home being sold. That would certainly place great strains on the child and the caring parent and, possibly, on the local authority which could have an obligation to rehouse. Despite what the Secretary of State said at the end of his speech, it is worrying that the Bill does not provide for cash maintenance payments to be reduced where a property transfer is agreed.

Another problem is that, while the Bill proposes that caring parents on low wages who claim family credit will get a £15 maintenance disregard, it does not begin to address the real obstacles in making the transition from home to work. A lone parent who stays at home on income support and gets her mortgage payments covered does not

receive that benefit in family credit if she goes to work. The Bill says nothing about the shortage and the cost of suitable child care for the lone parent who tries to get a job.

The Bill is useful, and to that extent we welcome it, but its detail and application are seriously flawed. It enshrines a principle that we strongly support, but it would gain considerable credibility if the Secretary of State and his Department were already acting in a way that suggested that they also believed strongly in that principle. It addresses the problem of lone parenthood, the solution to which is a major deficiency in the area of social policy, but it does it in a halfhearted and lopsided way. It reflects priority for the interests of the Treasury rather than for the welfare of the mother and child and it requires substantial amendment and improvement. For those reasons, we shall vote in support of our reasoned amendment.

6.27 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) quoted from the *Daily Mail* which reported that the Government had been caught on the hop. We were not caught on the hop, but it is right to say that millions of taxpayers throughout the United Kingdom must foot the bill for other people's children. I support the Bill because many of those taxpayers have wives and children of their own, and many of them earn a great deal less than the parent who has abandoned his children. That cannot be fair, right or just and we must do something about it.

Only lone parents who are receiving social security benefits will be required to name the father, and about three quarters of them already do. There are some reasons for exempting them from doing that, but I shall not give them publicity because some people would quickly play the system.

Mr. Allen: The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) never does that.

Mr. Dickens: No. There are certainly avenues of exemption, but they are few.

Absent parents must accept responsibility for their children, and the Bill supports the children. Maintenance payments help the lone parent, even if she is on income support. I use the word "she", as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did, because we know that most of those involved are lone mothers and just a small percentage are lone fathers. Nevertheless, the principle applies in both directions. It would be easier for a lone mother than a lone father to enter employment, particularly as £15 a week of maintenance will be ignored for calculating entitlement to family credit, community charge benefit or housing benefit. No reference has been made so far to the fact that the number of hours worked which qualifies a person for family credit will be reduced from 24 to 16. That will be a tremendous help.

The main thrust of the Bill is that all parents should honour their responsibilities to their children by paying a reasonable amount towards their upkeep. Why do we say a reasonable amount? At the moment, the maintenance system operates through different courts and the DSS. Let me recite a little story. Research has revealed that in different parts of the United Kingdom there were two fathers with identical circumstances. Each had one child and each earned £150 a week. The judgment in one court was that the father should pay £5 maintenance towards his child. In the other court the judgment was that the father should pay £50. That difference is absolutely absurd. It may surprise hon. Members to learn that the median time to produce a maintenance award varies from 48 days in a magistrates court to 131 days in a county court.

Under the current system, there is no automatic way of reviewing awards. Yet, as children grow older, they cost more to feed and to clothe. The income of one or both parents may change over time and, of course, prices change. In two fifths of cases the payment of the award falls into arrears. The full amount of arrears is recovered in only 23 per cent. of cases where the DSS takes action. Enforcement can take six weeks or more.

In 1989 only 30 per cent. of lone mothers and 3 per cent. of lone fathers received regular child maintenance. In 1989 only 23 per cent. of lone parents receiving income support received child maintenance payments. In 1979 the figure was 50 per cent. Although absent parents as a group have lower average incomes than the population at large, there is evidence that higher maintenance awards could be afforded in some cases. Maintenance awards represent only about 11 per cent. of the total net income of absent parents on above average incomes.

We are talking about numbers. As the hon. Member for Oldham, West rightly said, it is estimated that child maintenance is an issue for 2 million families. The proposals are expected to ensure that about 200,000 more lone parents receive regular child maintenance payments once the new system is fully operational. The Government have already increased the target amount of maintenance to be recovered from £180 million in 1989-90—the target which has been achieved—to £260 million for 1990-91. It is forecast that in the fullness of time we may save the taxpayer about £400 million. That is a lot of money.

Under the Child Support Bill, maintenance will be calculated according to a formula outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. An analysis of that formula reveals four elements. The first element is a maintenance requirement. That represents the day-to-day expenses of maintaining children and it is the sum which all parents should pay if they can afford to do so. The maintenance requirement consists of income support allowances which would be paid for the children and for the parent who is responsible for their care if the family had no other income.

The second element is exempt income and applies for each parent. It represents the income that the parent keeps for his own essential expenses before any maintenance payments are calculated. That is the first charge on each parent's income and takes precedence over any contribution to maintenance. In fairness to the child's needs, it is therefore right that the sum consists only of essential expenditure. We must remember that when one partner leaves home he often has another partner who has children and there is no sense in making both families dependent on social security benefits. We must strike the right balance and the Government and their advisers believe that this formula does so. The exempt income comprises the cost of caring for the natural children when they are living with their parents and the day-to-day living expenses and housing costs of the liable parents.

The third element is the rate of deduction from the assessable income, which ensures that absent parents contribute reasonable amounts towards their children's upkeep as soon as they can afford to do so. That is important. Maintenance will be deducted only from

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assessable income, which is total income after tax, national insurance contributions and the absent parent's basic living and housing expenses. For that reason, the Government want the remaining assessable income to be shared equally between the children and the absent parent until the maintenance bill is paid.

The final element is a protected level of income. That means that a person who is liable to pay maintenance and is not receiving income support will keep enough of his or her income to ensure that it remains above income support levels even after maintenance payments have been made. Those elements are a protection and the Child Support Agency will work closely to that formula. The system will not be hit and miss as it has been through the courts. There will be consistency, and that is important.

The maintenance requirement does not fix the maximum amount of child maintenance that should be paid. Once the requirement is met, the liable parent should pay something above that amount so that the children can share in their parents' standard of living. About one in four parents will meet the maintenance requirement in full in the first instance. As liable parents tend to be younger than the working population in general, and as real incomes tend to rise over time, it is to be expected that many other liable parents will be able to meet the requirement in full. However, once the maintenance requirement is met, the rate of deduction from assessable income will be reduced. There will also be an overall limit above which the formula will cease to apply.

We have not heard much so far about pounds, shillings and pence. The formula is designed to produce an average child maintenance assessment of about £40 a week. The average assessment in the current system is about £25 a week. In about 25 per cent. of cases the maintenance requirement will be paid in full. It is expected that the maintenance requirement generally will represent some 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. of the absent parent's take-home pay and about 20 per cent. of his or her gross income when all the deductions have been taken.

Under the new system there will be virtually no need for the application of discretion or for a process of bargaining or negotiation. Those of us who have sat as magistrates in juvenile courts have heard bargaining and negotiations going on. We have heard the false promises and so on. The process is lengthy, promises are not always met and people have to be brought back to court. We should now dismiss any discretion because the formula is laid down. The Government plan to transfer responsibility for the assessment of maintenance to the new Child Support Agency. That will relieve the courts of a heavy case load and avoid the increase that would take place when annual reviews of maintenance are introduced.

The functions of the agency will be to provide information and advice to the public on how the formula works and how to make a claim for child maintenance, and on its services. It will certainly help a number of Members of Parliament when that is accurately spelt out. The agency will identify and trace liable persons if their whereabouts are unknown. It will become skilful at that. There are now many more ways of tracing people than there were years ago. People can be traced not only through community charge lists, but through medical lists, dental lists and polling lists.

The agency will also obtain information on the incomes and circumstances of the parents of the child for whom maintenance is claimed. It will also assess maintenance to be paid by applying the rules that are laid down. It will make an estimated assessment in the absence of all the required information. That will be tricky, but the agency will become experienced. The agency will notify both parents of the assessment in the absence of all the required information. It will record and monitor payments made where appropriate, take appropriate enforcement action at an early date when payments are not made—a point that worried the hon. Member for Oldham, West—review the assessment at regular intervals and present the facts when an appeal against assessment is made.

Hon. Members heard a list of places where it appeared likely that the Government would set up the agencies, but the agency will have a number of processing centres throughout the United Kingdom, each with up to about 500 staff processing applications, tracing clients and calculating complicated assessments. According to information that I have been able to glean, the agency's total staff is thought likely to number about 5,000. Over a period, the agency will take on all cases where a lone parent is receiving income support or family credit. Others will be able to use it for a fee.

Briefly, almost in conclusion—I was hoping that some of you would intervene so that I could make a longer speech, but you have left me alone——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Not me.

Mr. Dickens: Not you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, except when you were blowing your nose.

Over a period, the agency will take on responsibility for assessing and reviewing child maintenance claims. The courts will continue to have jurisdiction over related matters which arise when parents separate or divorce. Such matters include residence of and contact with children, disputed paternity and spousal maintenance. Those are matters on which we could not ask an agency to rule. They must be judged by a court—there is no other way of doing it. If somebody says, "I was not the father of that child," the only place to settle the matter is in court with evidence being presented by both sides. Obviously, we do not want the Government, the Secretary of State or his junior Ministers to be involved in deciding whether somebody is the father of a child.

The courts will also deal with contact and maintenance. Both issues must be decided by reference to the interests of the child. However, the Government believe that those otherwise two separate issues should be decided on the basis of rather different criteria. There can be no direct connection between those issues.

Mr. Frank Field: Full stop.

Mr. Allen: Next, please.

Mr. Dickens: Opposition Members are being mischievous. I have several more pages of notes, but I have a reputation for being a fair man and many hon. Members wish to speak in this important debate.

In conclusion, it is fortunate that the Government have introduced this Bill. It is absolutely outrageous that a man can walk out on a women with a child, start another relationship and have no concern or care for his own child, leaving the women to get on with it. All parents should

take responsibility for their children. The taxpayer should be relieved of the burden. The Bill is in the interests of mothers, children and, certainly, taxpayers.

6.45 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): The only thing that I share with the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is his distrust of the court system in settling maintenance matters. However, the hon. Gentleman said that this measure will save the taxpayer many millions of pounds. That statement goes to the root of Conservative Members' thinking—it is a matter not of child support but of how much the taxpayer can be saved. The hon. Gentleman's approach has been far too simplistic in a complicated and emotional issue.

I enjoyed the speech of the Secretary of State. It was a very caring speech. The Department of Social Security has genuinely attempted to deal with an extremely knotty and difficult question to the best of its ability. I listened to the equally caring speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I like the principles of the Bill. I like what the Secretary of State has done, and I like what the Government are doing.

I understand why my hon. Friend moved his reasoned amendment. I wish that it had not been a reasoned amendment because I support what the Government are trying to do. I wish that we were not voting tonight and that we could put matters right in Committee and on Report. If the fact that we shall vote on a reasoned amendment, which I shall support because I agree with my hon. Friend, gives some power to the elbow of the Secretary of State for Social Security against the Treasury, it is well worth doing so. My hon. Friend is right: the Treasury's influence in this matter casts doubt on the excellent intentions of the Bill and of the White Paper.

Twenty years ago, before I came to this House, I was a solicitor. I dealt with many matrimonial and maintenance cases—gruesome cases indeed for any caring person to deal with. My experience is shared by every hon. Member. Some of the most difficult cases with which we must deal in our surgeries relate to custody and maintenance. All hon. Members deal with such difficult cases, irrespective of party affiliation. I congratulate the Government on at least making an attempt to tackle the problem.

As a very young Back Bencher, I was lucky enough to move a private Member's motion on this very issue. That was in 1966 or 1967. I said that all maintenance payments should be made through what was then the Department of Health and Social Security, and that such matters should not be brought before the courts. My own Front Bench divided the House on the grounds of cost and rights, and I was opposed by all sorts of people. The Government are introducing similar provisions now, and I believe that they are right to do so.

Let us make no mistake about it: this is not just a matter of statistics; it involves the group in the most acute poverty and deprivation in this country today—the single-parent family. We are dealing with one of the most emotional matters of which one could possibly conceive. We are talking about love turned to hatred, and about hatred and fear. There is fear in courts when mothers fear that they might lose their children.

Hitherto, such matters have almost invariably gone through the magistrates courts, but to the average citizen the magistrates court is a criminal court. Although the mother is there on behalf of her family, she feels that she is going to a building that administers the criminal law and in doing so is going against her husband. The husband feels bitter that his wife is branding him a criminal by taking him to a criminal court.

The most terrible thing of all is if the children are old enough to be involved in the case and to attend the court, because they see their parents fighting over them in a place that deals with criminal law, not family law. In their wisdom on this matter, the Government are taking us away from that system and away from the courts. I can forgive many of the Bill's defects for that very reason, although I hope that those defects will be amended in Committee or on Report.

If there is any attempt in this House to reintroduce a penalty clause, I hope that the other place will reject it again and again. Their Lordships were right to reject the provisions of the original clause 22. They were independent of the Treasury, took a balanced view and acted according to their consciences. I hope that they will do so again if the Government are misguided enough to force through the equivalent of that clause 22. This is always a matter of acute emotion.

Dr. Godman: In view of my right hon. Friend's legal training and experience, may I ask him whether a woman who is appealing against a decision would have the right to legal aid?

Mr. Oakes: I have not practised for 20 years, so I cannot advise my hon. Friend. However, I hope that such a woman would have the right to legal aid; otherwise, she will be in an impossible position. If she had to represent herself, realistically, she would not then be able to contest the matter.

The Government have some difficulties with the Bill, but we would have similar difficulties if we were in government. Indeed, any Government would have difficulties: this is a difficult matter. I believe that about one in three marriages in this country end in divorce. That is a terrifying figure. Many of those marriages result in children, so children are involved in divorce.

From my experience, which I am sure is shared by all hon. Members, divorce is rarely a matter of black and white. It is rarely a case of the husband being wholly wrong and the wife being wholly right, or vice versa. It is often six of one and half a dozen of the other, or some other proportion. One of the divorced parties may get married again, cohabit or form another relationship. That is perfectly legal.

I was a little doubtful about what the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth would do with such people. Any Government must accept that remarriages or subsequent relationships happen. It is all very well to watch "Dallas" on television or to watch Hollywood films and to see American millionaires who have two, three or four wives, but the fact remains that the average working or middle-class person in this country cannot afford adequately to keep two families. That is the truth of a high divorce rate, and the Government, the House and the nation must accept that.

It is a difficult job being a Member of Parliament, but I would not like to be a child support officer. It will be a virtually impossible job. The child support officer will have to decide whether to rob Peter to pay Paul. It is no use the House saying that the family of the first marriage should

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be so adequately maintained that the family of the second marriage faces deprivation. We are talking not about punishment, but about children, their rights and support for them. That is the central issue that the Government are trying to tackle and, having listened to the Secretary of State, I am certain that they are trying to do so in a balanced way.

I know that the Government have been criticised about the regulations. I would give a lot of discretion to the child support officers and would not tie them down with too many regulations. Although the Treasury would not like that and people would criticise the system because of it, I would give those officers that discretion. They will face such manifold variations that no Secretary of State or civil servant can lay down regulations that will meet all the situations that they will encounter.

The Secretary of State suggested, probably at the behest of the Treasury, that he would reintroduce some provisions along the lines of the original clause 22. I hope that the Government will be lenient if they do so. If not, as I have said, I hope that the other place will throw them out.

Apart from the reasons given in the White Paper, such as the obvious and clear-cut examples of rape and incest, there are many reasons why a woman will not disclose the name of her child's father. Let us take an example from the best end of the scale. A woman may have had an affair with a married man who has a family. The woman may not apply for maintenance because she does not want to break up that family. That is not vindictiveness or lack of co-operation; it is compassion. It would cost the nation and the Department a lot more money if the woman were to name that father.

Let us now consider the position of a youngster who was a little under age when she conceived—I have had all these cases in my constituency. The father was a brilliant student, going on to university. The young woman did not take any action, because she did not want to blight his career. She was not acting out of cowardice or trying to sponge off the system. The sort of question that the child support officers will have to consider is, was the woman's refusal to name the father simple wilfulness or compassion and kindness?

Some women will not apply for maintenance because they fear that it will give the father the right of access and custody when they do not want him to have it. The woman loves the child and does not want him or her under the influence of the father. I am not talking about sexual abuse —just about an influence being brought to bear on the child that the mother does not want. Such a woman may refuse to reveal the name of the father.

At what we could call "the bad end of the scale", a promiscuous girl may have a baby without even knowing who the father is. We must remember that we are talking not about the mother, but about the child. The Bill deals with providing adequate maintenance for children. The Government should not take £7-odd off a woman who may be acting with the best of motives.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West said, we should look at the Australian and Swedish systems and at what happens in other countries which are facing the same problem but which have found a far better solution to it.

I found particularly upsetting a recent constituency case which I submitted to the Secretary of State. I am not sure whether the reply came from him or from his Parliamentary Private Secretary. I have a constituent—I shall call her Mrs. N., because I do not want to reveal the family—a grandmother, living in Widnes, whose daughter died when she was 26. Her daughter was married and her husband had never contributed a penny in maintenance to either the child whom the case concerned or to another child. In that caring family, the grandmother looked after her grandchild, Leanne, and another daughter who lived in another part of my constituency looked after the other child.

The grandmother came to see me about a guardian's allowance, and I wrote to the Secretary of State. She could not obtain a guardian's allowance because, on her own admission, the father, although he had never contributed a penny, was still alive. He had been to the mother's funeral, but she did not know where he lived except that it was somewhere in Liverpool. The grandmother was refused a guardian's allowance, and it was suggested that she consulted a solicitor and start proceedings against the father. The mind boggles at the idea of her being able to do it. I am not even sure whether she would be eligible for legal aid.

I hope that, in such acute cases of guardianship, where the child is in effect an orphan because one parent is dead and the other has never maintained the child, under the new system, if the Department of Social Security fail to find the father and to obtain an order against him, a guardianship allowance will automatically be paid to a grandmother, aunt or sister, or whoever it may be. That person, quite apart from keeping the family together and keeping the child within the love of that family, is saving the Department and the country tens of thousands of pounds a year which it would cost if that child were put in care.

I hope that, within the tight rules of guardianship allowances, if the Department fails to find a father and to obtain an order against him, a guardianship allowance will automatically be paid to the person within the family who is caring for the child.

I welcome the Bill. I will vote with my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West tonight, because there are defects in it, but I wish the Bill and the Secretary of State well. I wish that we had done this years ago. This is a good Bill, which will affect for the better hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of people in Britain.

7.2 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes). I congratulate him on his speech and his welcome to the Bill. He made an excellent speech, in contrast with the poor one made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). He spoke with great feeling and sincerity and with long experience from his time as a solicitor of the acute deprivation, the emotional problems and the hatreds and fears which develop in these cases.

The Opposition's only real criticism of the Bill is that it was not introduced earlier. The Government can take full credit for doing now what people might have liked to see done earlier, but we are looking at many changes in society.

The Family Policy Study Centre has set out clearly many of the changes that are occurring. The right hon. Gentleman said that one in three marriages ended in divorce. The centre says:

"If present trends continue almost four out of 10 new marriages will end in divorce and in future between one in four and one in five children will experience their parents' divorce before they reach 16."

How children are brought up is the hallmark of any civilised society and the Bill directs itself to that by bringing about a sense of responsibility. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) said when she was Prime Minister, no father should escape responsibility for his children. That is why this is such a good Bill which has met with agreement on both sides. I am only sorry that the Opposition intend to divide the House on it today.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Oldham, West did not reply when I asked what exactly was the small disregard that the Labour party wanted on maintenance payments. I do not think that it has thought that through. If it had, it would have specific figures. As I understand it, if it thought that £7·50 was an appropriate figure, the cost would be £100 milion. Is that the figure that it has in mind? A disregard of £15 a week would cost £180 million. We need to be clear about the Labour party's thinking on that.

The fallacy of the Opposition's thinking was apparent when the hon. Member for Oldham, West talked about the need for an incentive in relation to maintenance payments. The incentive must be that offered by the Government which is to help those mothers who want to work to obtain work by providing a £15 a week maintenance disregard for people who would be entitled to family credit. As well as economic benefits there are social benefits for single mothers who want to work which gives them the opportunity to make new contacts. Every mother faces the dilemma of deciding how much time to spend looking after her children and how much time to spend making other contacts which a single mother in particular needs, but there is no reason why the Labour party should simply think about incentives in terms of maintenance payments. What is the incentive for? Is the incentive just for the mother to be honest? Is that what the Labour party thinks the incentives are needed for?

A table published by the Family Policy Study Centre gives reasons for not wanting to give names and addresses to the Department of Social Security under the present arrangement. It shows that 30 per cent. of single mothers want no more to do with the former partner, 28 per cent. do not know where he or she is, and 14 per cent. do not want to cause a problem for the partner. I should not have thought that those were reasons which needed some sort of incentive for the mother to come forward with a name. Fear of violence, which is a real factor, is given as a reason by only 4 per cent. Obviously, there are others making up the 100 per cent. But clearly there are no real reasons there for an incentive.

It is important that the Government should allow a lot of discretion if clause 22 is included in the Bill. It is right that it should be there as a deterrent, but it is not something that we want to see used. Perhaps the Labour party has difficulty in understanding that argument as it has failed to understand the importance of a deterrent in other areas. We need a deterrent even though it is used only in the rarest circumstances. I agree with the right hon. Member for Halton that a great deal of latitude should be given to officers who have to work in that area so that they can use their discretion and not apply the sanction unless it is really necessary.

The mere fact that a sanction exists would be a safeguard for the mother because it would mean that she could not be accused by the father of having given his name to the Child Support Agency just on a whim. She could say that she had to do it or she would have lost her benefit. One would have to take the greatest care where there was any danger of violence, but we need not worry about including clause 22 on that basis. There have been cases of violence, but I imagine that they occur anyway. One could not argue that the violence occurred just because the mother had given a name to the Child Support Agency.

I am not sure whether the mother needs to give an address. It must be possible for the Department of Social Security to trace people using just the name with perhaps some information about where the person used to live or work. It must be possible to trace people by their national insurance number, without necessarily knowing their address.

The centre's figures show also that the number of lone parent families has increased from 500,000 in 1971 to more than 1 million today. Only one in 10 of them are headed by a man. More than half are headed by divorced or separated mothers, and single, unmarried mothers make up another 250,000 of the total. More than 1·6 million children—one in eight of all dependent children—are members of lone parent families. It is estimated that between one fifth and one quarter of all children will at one time live with a lone parent.

Lone parents head one in six families with dependent children, which is double the number 20 years ago. Divorce is the biggest cause of the increase. Seventy two per cent. of lone mothers were found to be claiming income support, but 85 per cent. had received income support payments at some time since becoming a lone parent. The proportion of lone parents claiming income support who also receive maintenance payments fell from 50 per cent. in 1979 to 23 per cent. currently. The cost of social security benefits to lone parents is calculated to be £3·2 billion in 1988-89, compared with £1·4 billion in 1981-82.

We must do all that we can to impart a sense of responsibility at an early age. Many health workers in my own constituency feel that such a sense of responsibility should be imparted even to primary school children. Bolton health authority reports that there were 64 pregnancies in girls of school age in 1989, compared with 62 in 1985. That demonstrates the need to instil a sense of responsibility at an early age.

One case involves a boy of 14 who is in care, and who has just fathered a child. I am not sure whether the Child Support Agency will have powers to pursue the parents of such a boy. Mention has been made of the arrangements in Australia. In Switzerland, welfare arrangements include the extended family. One should be able to look to the parents of such young fathers to accept responsibility for contributing to the maintenance of children born to school-age mothers. A sense of responsibility must be instilled into the extended family as well as into the individual.

I wish the Bill well, and I am glad that the Opposition support it in principle. It is perhaps a sad reflection on current trends that it is necessary to introduce such

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

legislation now because of the increase in the number of lone parent families. Clause 22 should be reinstated, but only as a deterrent to be used in rare cases. A woman could use the provisions of that clause as a reason why she divulged the father's name. There should be no need for a payment to encourage such honesty, which is what the Opposition, with their half-baked thinking, are suggesting.

7.13 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) made an interesting speech about the need to instil enlightenment and responsibility into our youngsters, even at the early stages of their schooling. Society is not doing enough to encourage a responsible attitude towards parenthood.

I am frightened by the nature of the debate so far, in two particular respects. I am nervous that we seem to be accepting that nothing can be done about the increase in marital breakdowns. It is difficult for Governments to become involved in what are really family matters. If the Government do interfere, they must do so with great care, in legislating on relationships between individuals. However, I hope that no one will argue that it is impossible to stem the increase in family breakdowns, which are not in the interests of society or the Department. The Minister knows better than most that, in terms of a cost-benefit analysis, every saved marriage saves the state a lot of money.

The Department's responsibilities are limited to maintenance enforcement and maintenance payments, but I hope that the Government will not lose sight of the fact that it should be possible to introduce measures to support the family and to prevent marriages from breaking down. Moving towards a system of administrative law is fraught with difficulties. The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said that the court system does not work. Only this week, I encountered the case of a lady who has been waiting six months for maintenance payments to be obtained from her husband, who walked out on her six months ago, and who is now earning a handsome wage in London.

It might be possible to expedite matters within the legal system. Family courts could be one way. I agree that it is inappropriate to drag marriages through magistrates courts or sheriff courts. As a former practising solicitor, I hold the view that the adversarial efforts of the respective spouses' solicitors can make matters worse. However, a family court could act with greater sensitivity and urgency in establishing the parents' rights and circumstances. I hope that the Government will not give up either on finding ways to save marriages.

The concept behind the Bill—which is that parents should be responsible for their children's maintenance—is entirely unexceptionable. It is only right and proper that we should support it. No father should escape his responsibilities. However, perhaps the Department has adopted a somewhat knee-jerk approach. Civil servants will always look for a quick administrative fix, but in doing so they may create difficulties for the child support officers for which the Bill provides in making its provisions operate smoothly and successfully. Although the court situation has disadvantages, at least a magistrate or judge can use his discretion within the law in a way that child support officers will not be able to do.

I support the argument that the Bill's provisions should be implemented on a voluntary basis. That is the only sensible way in which civil servants will have any chance of acting effectively.

Dr. Godman: Given his experience of social security matters in Scotland, does the hon. Gentleman envisage representation by lawyers for those caught up in the appeals procedure—perhaps through the granting of legal aid—or does he expect them to be represented by local welfare rights officers, as happens with social security appeal tribunals?

Mr. Kirkwood: That is an important point. Certainly nothing in the Bill suggests to me that legal aid will suddenly become available to those who appeal—although, as a former practising solicitor, I feel that that would be right and proper.

The hon. Gentleman has reminded me of a point that I sought to make when considering the possibility of family courts being used as an alternative route. If legal aid were made available and sensitive arrangements involving family courts were introduced, the Bill might not even be necessary.

I would be "dumfoon'art"—as we say in my part of the world—if the Minister confirmed that legal aid would be available. I think that single parents will be forced to argue their own cases, or—as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has suggested—forced to rely on citizens advice bureaux and welfare rights officers to try to make the best of a bad job on their behalf.

I should be interested to know where the £400 million saving will come from. Let us leave aside the political argument about the Treasury. The Secretary of State said that he thought that £200 million was generated each year by the liable relative section of the Department of Social Security. Is the £400 million saving mentioned in the explanatory memorandum in addition to that sum? If so, I should like to know how it is possible to make such an estimate.

Will there be any way of judging the success of the agency in meeting the target set for it? Will this free-standing agency be able to advert each spring, when the public expenditure White Paper is published, to the amount that it has saved the Treasury? That, surely, would be fiendishly difficult. I should like to know—I should be satisfied with a letter—how the figures have been arrived at, and how we can measure the success of the agency.

Given my experience as a country solicitor involved in family law, I am very nervous about the relationship that will be established in the mind of an estranged parent between the legislation and the right of access. Let us suppose that I am an estranged father. An enforcement officer knocks at my door. I have not seen my children for five or 10 years—perhaps by mutual consent, following a substantial falling-out with my wife during traumatic divorce proceedings.

If I am being dinned for, say, £10 per week, the first thing that I will do is knock on my solicitor's door and ask for an order for access. The court has next to no discretion—and nor should it have: if I am a natural parent, no court in the land can reasonably deny me access to my natural children. That, however, is rarely in the child's best

interests. The motivation for gaining access is entirely wrong: the aim is to get back at the mother—the estranged wife—who has fingered me, the estranged father, and set the child enforcement bureaucracy on me.

What, then, can I do? One option open to me is entirely malicious. I would not endorse such an action on anyone's part, but it is bound to happen: indeed, it happens already in the course of divorce proceedings. If the Government do not recognise that, they are storing up a good many problems for women who may have to endure knocks on the door from husbands to whom they happily waved goodbye 10 years earlier.

Mr. Frank Field: May I remind the hon. Gentleman of what he has just told us? He has said that his action would not be in the child's interest, because his motive would be wrong. Now that that has been repeated slowly, can he see what nonsense it is? People do many things with the wrong motives, but that does not necessarily mean that the outcome will be bad.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am speaking from experience. I haved acted in innumerable such cases, invariably representing women who want nothing whatever to do with their former husbands.

Mr. Field: It is different for the child.

Mr. Kirkwood: No, it is not. The mother becomes so upset that the child's interests are adversely affected. The mother is knocked right off balance. She has made her own life; she has got that man out of her hair, often after violence and cruelty. As soon as he comes back through the door, the relationship between the two of them will translate itself to the child in an inimical way. I have often seen that happen. I fear that the Bill will drive husbands to act for all the wrong reasons, and if it does it is not worth the candle: it will cause more trouble than it is worth.

I hope that the Government will heed the succinct and powerful arguments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). Clause 22 is indeed a big mistake: if enacted, it would penalise parents. The Social Security Advisory Committee has argued the case as powerfully as anyone. I also hope that the exemptions, and extended scope for exemptions, that the Secretary of State has announced will indeed come to pass. Any wife who has been able to procure a divorce on the basis of unreasonable behaviour on the part of her husband should be exempted automatically: by definition, the court would not have given her a divorce on that ground unless it was satisfied that unreasonable behaviour had indeed been dished out to her.

I am nervous about the extension of the inspectors' powers. I know that, in some respects, they are equivalent to the powers available to national insurance fund officers, but I do not think that that in itself is a reason for the House to allow, willy-nilly, a further extension of fairly draconian powers without paying close attention to the implications.

I hope that I have persuaded the Government that there is a long way to go. If they are determined to take the administrative route, rather than favouring a family court with proper support and legal aid, they must be very careful. In my view, they can implement the Bill sensibly, with the backing of the House, only if they adopt voluntary arrangements.

7.28 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): As most people know, I come from a working-class background—a loving background. My parents were happily married; and as they became more successful, so did my sister and I. When I married and started to bring up a family I, too, was very fortunate in that I was married to someone who treated me with tolerance. Like my sister and me, my children benefited as our lives progressed.

It was not until I became a Member of Parliament that I realised the sadness of single-parent families and recognised that lone parents were almost in despair. It seemed to me that it was necessary for the Government to address that important problem. We have heard from other speakers how lone parents saw courts as places where criminals were found and we heard how those parents felt almost in despair about what would happen to them in the courts. In that process, the parents became frightened and the children sometimes became victims of that terror. When the Government were prepared to introduce the Bill, I felt that it should receive support from Conservative and Opposition Members. I am pleased that hon. Members of all parties agree in principle that the Bill is necessary.

As a Conservative, I naturally greatly welcome the Bill. At the heart of Conservatism is a belief in the need for a balance between rights and responsibilities. Without the exercise of responsibility, rights are ultimately rendered useless, as we all know. Today, we hear everything about rights to this and that—not least from the Labour party —but not enough about responsibilities. The Bill is an explicit recognition of the inter-relationship between the two. Accountability is at the heart of our political system and should be a guiding principle in our private lives.

Unfortunately, many individuals are only too happy to neglect their responsibilities. Benefit offices are full of people who look to the state not merely to help them out during hard times, but to provide a convenient exit from personal obligations and duties. The Bill is part of a wider Government strategy to redress the imbalance. Why should mothers and fathers in my constituency struggle to provide their own children with a decent home and yet be expected to subsidise lone parents indefinitely?

I have heard a lot about the Treasury putting pressure on the Department of Social Security. I am pleased that the Treasury does so. The Treasury has only taxpayers' money and it has a responsibility to taxpayers. I am pleased that the parent who has disappeared is about to take up some of the taxpayers' burden. It is not a case of the Government shirking their duties—far from it. The Bill is a statutory mechanism that will ensure that individuals face up to their responsibilities.

It is surely an appalling state of affairs that in 1989 only 30 per cent. of lone mothers and 3 per cent. of lone fathers received regular child maintenance. That must be a scandal. Ultimately, it is the children who suffer. The Bill has their welfare at its heart. The proposed Child Support Agency has an important role in acting as an intermediary between the parents. As I have said, parents fear the courts.

I find the Bill reassuring. It is crucial that contact between the caring parent and the absentee parent is kept to an absolute minimum. Can my hon. Friend the Minister reassure me that the addresses of mothers will be kept in confidence? I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh

[Mr. David Evans]

and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who made a poignant point. We must ensure that, through the Bill, fathers whom the mothers have at last got rid of and whom they never want to see again are not able to make contact with the mothers and terrorise them and the children. Even if the mother only believes that that is a possibility, the child will suffer at her hands because she is terrified that the father will have access, if not to her children, at least to her. I want my hon. Friend to consider the points that have been made on that subject.

In financial terms, the Bill is not a draconian measure. Absent parents will not be squeezed until the pips squeak. Maintenance payments will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they reflect changing circumstances, and that must be right. Furthermore, it is important to remember that maintenance awards represent only 11 per cent. of the total net income of absent parents on above average incomes. The Government are still the biggest surrogate parent.

Equally importantly, the Bill provides incentives to lone parents who want to work, which must be good. The introduction of maintenance will reduce reliance on income support and will, therefore, lead to greater employment opportunities. There is also the plan to ignore the first £15 of maintenance when calculating entitlement to family credit, to community charge benefit and to housing benefit. I also welcome the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State which will reduce from 24 hours to 16 the number of hours worked per week required to qualify for family credit.

One of the most important elements of the Bill is its deterrent capacity. Today we have concentrated on fathers who have already deserted their children, but the measure also enables us to look to the future. The Bill sends a message to all prospective fathers, making it clear to them that they have a continuing responsibility. I hope that it will make them think long and hard about parental obligations.

The Bill is very important and the aims of the reforms are clear. The aims are that parents should honour their responsibilities to their children whenever they can afford to do so. A fair and reasonable balance will be struck with regard to the responsibilities of a parent for all the children whom he or she is liable to maintain. The system will produce fair and consistent results. Maintenance payments will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they reflect changes in circumstances. The incentive of parents to work will be maintained. The public will receive an efficient and effective service, and dependence on income support will be reduced. The Bill is an important measure concerning personal and social responsibilities. As such, it has my warmest support.

7.37 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I will begin by dwelling on the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). There are occasions in the House on which people speak with knowledge and passion, and most of us who listen to them believe that it would be good to make similar speeches ourselves. Although the emphasis of my speech may go against the tenor of both those speeches, I must say that they were impressive contributions.

I wanted to explain to the Secretary of State, who is not here for what I am sure are good reasons, that I did not spring to my feet when the announcement was made about where the regional offices are to be placed because I hoped to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to be able to say how pleased I was, as are other hon. Members who have new jobs coming into their area. The Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State know that a great deal of effort was made by all the hon. Members from the Wirral area in securing the jobs. Similar effort went into securing the Inland Revenue and Land Registry jobs. Those three moves by the civil service will make an appreciable difference to the riverside development between Wallasey and Birkenhead. I emphasise my thanks, as did other hon. Members. However, they will know from the tenor of what I have already said about the Bill that I do not have quite the same reservations as have hon. Members who said that they were "nevertheless" pleased to have 500 new jobs in their area. The Secretary of State is not here at the moment, but I expect him to return to the Chamber in sackcloth and ashes.

I move now from the consensus note sounded in previous speeches to emphasise what has happened over the past decade or more. For many people in this country there has been a collapse in the belief that they should, if they can, make a contribution towards the costs of their children. One has only to think about what would have happened had the Labour party been in power while that occurred. What would Conservative Members have said had they been in opposition? We would have been whacked all over the place as irresponsible, destroying the family and not caring about children.

Late in the day the Government have introduced a Bill, and, in a general sense, I welcome it. If we are right in thinking—and we have it on good authority—that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, and as the whole Treasury Bench must be in that mood to introduce the Bill, something quite bizarre must be going on upstairs today. I welcome the Government's change of heart, and their emphasis on the fact that this is an important area in which Governments can have some effect on people's behaviour. However, we do not want to overestimate the part that Government can play.

I intend to examine three aspects of the Bill in the hope that the Government will make concessions tonight—or, if not today, in Committee. First, I return to two questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). She asked both about capital sums that had been paid over in the past and about what happens where a parent looks after the child or children for part of the week. How will those things be valued when the formula is applied? The Secretary of State, in his normal deft manner at the Dispatch Box, told my hon. Friend in a slightly condescending way that such matters were immensely complicated. He then went on to answer the easy part of the question, about capital, totally ignoring my hon. Friend's other example.

I make a plea to the Government to take seriously the Select Committee report about families who responded to what was Government policy and made a clean break on divorce; a capital settlement was made and all the parties thought that that was the end of the affair. Under the Bill, those who abided by the Government's wish for a clean

break may find their settlements reopened, set aside and replaced by new responsibilities. I hope that the Government will make a clear declaration and commitment that they do not intend to open up the arrangements made by people who have made over capital sums which, when computed, are larger than what they would be expected to pay over the time that the child remains a responsibility of both parents. If the Government cannot do that out of good will, they ought to do it for the purely practical reason that setting up the agency will be difficult and there will be an enormous number of new cases. They would be well advised to look to the future rather than trying to rake up the past.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles made a real point, and the speeches of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton were important, too, because they brought the real world into the Chamber and into the debate. In the real world we do not all come in the neat little boxes in which the Government sometimes think we live. Many families will be in the situation described by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles, where part of the payment of maintenance—if we want to call it that—is given in the form of time, effort, care and feeding over part of the week. That is a real-life situation. We do not want to find that, by insisting that the formula under the Bill be applied, we destroy the arrangement whereby both parents care for the child. When the Under-Secretary of State replies, I hope that he will give us an idea what the Government think about that.

There is one clause about which almost every other hon. Member has spoken—some with real caution and some with fear—and which lies at the heart of the Bill. If the Government do not convince the House and the country that they will be able to administer the measure with real sensitivity towards women who fear what their husbands, ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends might do to them, they will lose the debate in the country.

That issue is linked to the idea of incentives. I realise that the question of incentives arises on a separate part of the Bill, but the Government have a blinkered view of incentives. I sympathise with their emphasis on the importance of incentives to work, and their wanting people to see a real difference when they move from benefit into work. They want people to take with them the whole of their maintenance payments if at all possible. I sympathise with that, because I run the same argument over child benefit both with my hon. Friends and with friends on the Conservative Benches. The difference is very real.

We are dealing with a sensitive area. If we want the maximum harmony in running the arrangements under the Bill, for ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends and for women, we must answer the following question: should we not allow a benefit disregard for people on income support who claim maintenance? The Minister may say that my views on that subject have changed. When we started out, I thought that it was unfair to single out those who could get maintenance orders and allow them to claim some of the money in the form of a disregard. I was persuaded to change my mind by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who said, "Hard luck—that's life: some people will have boyfriends or husbands whom they can pursue successfully. Why should they be penalised because not all mothers can be in that position?" I am persuaded by that argument, and also by the argument that, if we want to narrow the group down to the smallest possible number of mothers worried about giving the name of the father, we should get the largest possible number of mothers to give that information voluntarily at the first point of contact with the agency. More mothers will do that, and more fathers will understand why they do so, if, while they remain on benefit, mothers are allowed to keep part of the maintenance by partially offsetting it against benefit.

Like the Government, I see the issue in terms of incentives, but I broaden the meaning of the word "incentives". I thought that it was important, too, to have an incentive to help the measure to work well and smoothly, and to secure the maximum voluntary effect. Then, at the end of the day, we should be left only with those who have real worries about giving the father's name —that group has been mentioned already. It is unreasonable to expect the officers to go in to bat for the Government knowing that some of the mothers could have given the father's name if they had thought that they would be better off financially if they did so. If we are interested in making the measure work, we should extend our debate about incentives.

To make my last point, I shall ruffle slightly the calm waters that we have all been in until now by disagreeing with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. I start where the hon. Gentleman does by supporting the Government when they say that there is a clear divorce between paying maintenance and access and that the Bill and no other measure under consideration seeks to overrturn that status quo.

I do not have the experience that my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, who are solicitors, described effectively to the House. They said that they had seen customers who were frightened of their husbands or ex-boyfriends who were threatening them. I want to present another side of the truth, which I have seen, not in a solicitor's surgery but in my surgery or when I visit factories in Birkenhead. Some mothers have made it clear that they regard their husbands or ex-boyfriends as jerks and they want nothing to do with them. They have no intention of allowing them to see their children. As we get the measure working, I hope that a lot of the heat will go out of such cases where there is a dispute over access. Clearly the heat will never go out of some cases and we cannot expect it to do so where a husband or boyfriend has been cruel, violent or just plain stubborn and unreasonable about how people should live their daily lives.

Just as the Government wish to see greater responsibility taken, especially by males, for their children, I want to see a slow but sure change in the debate about access. I believe that that debate will be approached much more securely once the question of maintenance and payments is out of the way. An increasing number of children grow up without knowing both their parents. It would be foolish for anyone in the House to say that he knows the consequences of that on the next generation.

One of my great mates in Birkenhead was asked by his daughter not to come to school to pick her up because her friends at the school had asked who he was. They did not have what she called "Daddy" as part of their life. That is exceptional, thank goodness, but it happened at one school in Birkenhead. As I said, we do not know what will be the consequences of children not knowing both their parents as they grow up. We cannot legislate that

[Mr. Frank Field]

grown-ups be happy, but we can legislate—and we can do so in this measure—to enable more children to grow up happily knowing both of their parents. That will be an important achievement if it results from this measure.

My last point has been emphasised before, so I can be brief. When my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) opened for the Opposition he said, in effect, that the Bill was a half measure. It is not unimportant for that, but it is still a half measure. We should move towards a position where if mothers are awarded maintenance payments, the state guarantees them whether she works or not, and has the responsibility for collecting the money. Then we can bring the Minister to the Dispatch Box if he fails to do so and the bill for us taxpayers is enormous. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West said that that was the direction in which the Bill should have moved. I hope that it will not be long before I am sitting behind him when he is the Secretary of State introducing such a measure.

7.53 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I welcome the Bill. Earlier in the debate I was impressed when my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) quoted some statistics about the rising tide of family break-ups and of fathers, and occasionally mothers, who walk away from their responsibilities for their children and leave their family in difficulties or as a financial burden on the taxpayer. It has been said that there are now some 2 million families in that position. Only 12 years ago, of such families on income support, some 50 per cent. received maintenance payments from the absent parent. Today only 23 per cent. receive such payments. It is increasingly left to the state to pick up the bill or, to be more precise, to taxpayers, such as my constituents on low incomes, to foot the bill for the children of parents who do not face up to their responsibilities.

I welcome the steps that are being taken in the Bill to staunch that trend and to formalise and standardise the system of child maintenance in such cases. The present system of maintenance is unnecessarily fragmented, uncertain in its results, slow and ineffective. It operates through several different courts and through the Department of Social Security. The effect on families is uncertainty.

Inconsistent decisions are made about how much maintenance should be paid. For example, recent research identified two fathers, each earning £150 per week and each with one child to maintain. One father was required to pay £5 per week in maintenance while the other was required to pay £50. That hardly seems consistent. The median time to produce a maintenance award varies from 48 days in a magistrates court to 131 days in the county court.

Under the current system there is no automatic way in which awards can be reviewed. Yet we all know that as children grow older they cost more to feed and clothe. The income of one or both parents may change from time to time and, of course, prices certainly go up. In some two fifths of cases payments of awards fall into arrears. The full amount of the arrears is recovered in only about 23 per cent. of cases where the Department of Social Security takes action. Enforcement can take six weeks or more.

A major and valuable part of the Bill is the establishment of the Child Support Agency. At last we shall have an agency which has responsibility for tracing absent parents and assessing, collecting and, where necessary, enforcing maintenance payments. It will need powers to make a legally binding assessment, to require information and to determine methods of payment. It will be required to review the maintenance payments every year. We must look forward to the day when the agency is fully operational and families do not have to go through the trauma of taking a case to the magistrates court.

Earlier in the debate I was surprised to hear from the Labour Front Bench the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) talk of zero rating fathers on income support. Surely it is appropriate that absent parents on income support should have the same basic responsibility to their children as others. Is it not right, therefore, to bring them within the system and, with appropriate exceptions, to expect from them a small maintenance contribution? The White Paper suggested that the contribution should be 5 per cent. of the adult personal allowance, in line with the standard deductions made for other purposes. Only in December 1989, the hon. Member for Oldham, West was reported in *The Independent* as saying:

> "My view is that fathers should always make some contribution towards their children, even if they are unemployed and it can only be a token amount. Men should recognise they have a responsibility".

Why the sudden change?

The Labour party has decided to tack yet another spending pledge on to its already ample list. There is a competition to father the top priorities and pledges. After all, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has told us that the top priority is child benefits and pensions, and nothing else. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has told us that the only top priority is the national health service. Last week, on the BBC, the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) told us that Labour's top priority was education. Not to be outdone, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) told us that it was overseas development. Now the hon. Member for Oldham, West has decided to trump the lot of them with his father of all pledges.

The Labour party proposes that lone parents on benefit should be able to keep part of the absent parent's maintenance, but it has not said how big that maintenance disregard on income support would be. It is worth bearing in mind that a £5 disregard would cost £70 million, a £10 disregard £130 million and a £15 disregard £180 million. The Labour party has not said when, if ever, such a commitment would be introduced. It is not one of its two unconditional "priority pledges", as defined by the hon. Member for Derby, South. Perhaps it falls within that category of pledges that the hon. Lady described as

> "desirable aims . . . something that we hope to do as resources allow".

I believe that the Bill is a disincentive to family break-up. It removes the advantages from parents who just walk away from their responsibilities. I share the objective of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that more and more of our children should know both of their parents. The Bill will act as an incentive to families to keep together.

The Bill will ensure that parents honour their responsibilities towards their children whenever they can afford to do so. It will ensure that the maintenance system

produces fairer and more consistent results than at present. It will also ensure that parents' incentives to work are improved and that their dependence on income support is reduced. The Bill deserves the full support of the House.

8.3 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): All reasonable people agree that absent parents should make a reasonable contribution to the upbringing of their children and should not be allowed to turn their backs on their financial responsibilities. On that basis, I support the thinking behind the Bill as it ensures that parents should not be able to renege on their children.

Although I support the principles of the Bill, I have some major reservations about its details and its omissions. I also share the anxiety expressed by many other hon. Members about the vital issues to be left to regulation, which will not be addressed by primary legislation.

I am particularly concerned about the retrospective aspects of the Bill, about which other hon. Members have expressed anxiety, which mean that certain issues that have been resolved, are dormant and not subject to conflict will be resurrected. An amnesty for such cases would be highly desirable.

Apart from obliging absent parents to make a proper financial arrangement for their children, I also expect a child support Bill to help to raise the standard of living of those children now on the poverty line. It should also encourage lone parents to go out to work. Those issues have not been properly addressed by the Bill, although I acknowledge that the disregard for mothers who want to go out to work is a step in the right direction.

I deplore the fact that, for the poorest—those on income support—the collection of the maintenance payments will not benefit the child or children. The caring parent will not be one penny better off, as the maintenance payment will simply substitute income support. It is not clear whether those lone parents whose income support is replaced by maintenance payments will not be worse off as a result. If income support is replaced, parents may not then qualify for the benefits associated with it, such as the ability to borrow from the social fund and to obtain free school dinners. When the Minister replies, I hope that he can clarify this matter and assure me that, under the new proposed scheme, parents will be protected from such possible losses.

Considerable concern has been expressed about the obligation on the caring parent to co-operate with the Child Support Agency in naming and locating the absent parent. I do not condone the use of the threat of violence as a means of absolving an absent parent from his responsibilities to his children. I recognise, however, that relationships in some families become so embittered and so irrational, and in others that violence is so prevalent, that women are genuinely fearful of reprisals. It is also important to remember that there are other very good reasons why some women cannot bring themselves to name the father of their child—shame, for example.

A number of organisations that have studied the Bill and written to hon. Members about it agree that, in a number of instances, it might be in the best interests of the child to have no contact with the absent parent and for all ties, including financial ones, to be severed. The question of access is difficult to resolve if financial provision is being made. Some children may not benefit from the proposed changes, and parents, particularly mothers, may be reluctant to co-operate with the Child Support Agency. A solution to those problems has been advocated by the National Council for One Parent Families. It suggests that there should be a financial incentive for mothers to co-operate.

I strongly support the use of a small disregard to encourage women to co-operate. That would also mean that the children of the poorest families would be marginally better off. A financial incentive rather than threats and disincentives should be offered to encourage mothers to co-operate with the agency. The amounts involved could be modest, as relatively small sums are important to people on such low incomes. If the money runs out on Thursday and one does not get paid until Friday, £5 could make a lot of difference.

The financial incentive would mean that only those with genuine and pressing reasons would decline to co-operate with the agency. In those cases, I strongly believe that no financial penalty should be incurred. To allow the DSS to withhold £7·35 a week when a caring parent withholds information is punitive, harsh and wrong. That penalty would adversely affect the children that society has a duty to protect. Such children are already on the poverty line. The report published yesterday by the National Children's Home questioned whether those children were even living at a subsistence level. Its report made it clear that it was lack of money, not ignorance, that led to an unhealthy diet.

To withhold £7-plus from extremely poor families would damage children who are unable to defend themselves. That would lead to hunger and untold misery. The financial hardship imposed on their mothers would add to the existing strains and tensions of their difficult lives. I accept that the onus should be on the mother to co-operate with the Child Support Agency, but I advocate the carrot rather than the stick approach in getting her to do so. Where there is a real threat or fear, the mother should not be punished for declining to co-operate.

The financial situation of lone-parent families will not be improved without the stability of guaranteed maintenance payments. Under the Bill, where an absent parent fails to pay maintenance—which may often be the case when the absent parent is self-employed—there is no mechanism to ensure that the lone parent receives guaranteed regular payments. That lack can result in hardship, disruption and uncertainty. The Child Support Agency could make a guaranteed maintenance payment to the lone parent and then proceed to chase the defaulter. That would take the lone parent and child out of the system and make the agency a genuine, not a token, buffer.

I am also concerned about the effect of the Bill on low-paid absent parents. While acknowledging that they must have responsibility, if their only income is income support—that is on the basis of them having no dependent relatives because they live alone—they are on subsistence level. To make a deduction of 5 per cent. from child support payments is, as the Children's Society says, petty and mean. It will not make a substantial difference, although it may adversely affect the person's standard of living. The Bill advocates what is clearly a regressive, not a progressive, system of collecting maintenance, and that aspect must be considered.

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

I reiterate my support for the principle of ensuring that absent parents do not avoid their responsibilities, but I have yet to be convinced that the provision for some children will not be eroded by the Bill. I also regret that the income of some one-parent families will not be improved by even a modest amount.

Without tackling the problem of child care, thereby enabling lone parents to get back to work, we shall be only skirting the complex social and economic problems that are increasing as a result of the change in family patterns and behaviour in society. I do not take that issue lightly, for during the time that I have been a Member my views on single parents have changed markedly. I do not take as readily as I did previously the liberal view that everything is all right and that we must go along with it. I see at first hand the unhappiness and misery that is created by the present state of affairs.

We have heard from hon. Members on both sides of the House about the need to repair marriages and make sure that children remain in contact with both parents. I fear that I see too many cases in my constituency of young single parents who have never been married and have never had a long-term relationship with the father of the child. I also see many single parents who have several children by different fathers and who lean on my desk, look across at me and ask, "What are you going to do about it?" We must give them a sense of responsibility for the future for themselves and their children, but that will not happen by the adoption of punitive measures.

The headmaster of a school in my constituency that I visited a few months ago told me that he had been a pupil at the same school. He said, "In those days, we felt really sorry for any child who did not have a dad, and the head teacher would make sure that, if any spare clothes or other help was available, it was pointed in the direction of that child. Today, children with dads in my school are the exception rather than the rule."

The children and parents in such circumstances that I see in my surgery are depressed and unhappy. They see no way out of their poverty, and they are usually trapped in poor housing. Frequently, they get into arrears and are unable to move home. They receive housing benefit, but if an element of their rent is for hot water and heating, and if they fall into arrears on that element, that often prohibits their being moved. They are irritable and bad-tempered with their children, and that does nobody any good. Clearly the whole situation needs serious attention.

The only way forward in the long term is a combination of child care, training and employment. We must recognise that single-parent families represent a phenomenon that is here to stay. It is no good taking a moral stance one way or the other. It is a form of family life that we must make work, and the only way to do so is to enable single parents to have the best opportunity to support their children.

8.15 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): The objectives of the Bill are admirable. I support its emphasis on parental obligation and its stress on the duties that both parents owe their children. The Government are right to take steps to ensure that the financial burden of supporting a child is not shifted to the taxpayer, without first making sure that everything reasonable is done to see that its parents between them contribute as much as they properly can to the child's support.

The criticism that the present system of deciding maintenance and then collecting it is fragmented, uncertain and often ineffective carries great force. Today, in two fifths of cases in which maintenance payments are ordered to be made, those against whom the orders are made fall into arrears. That is an extremely alarming statistic, and it does not take into account cases in which maintenance orders are not even sought. The figures show clearly that reform is needed. They give strength to the Government's case. That is why I support the thrust of the Bill, although I have anxieties of substance about certain aspects of it.

The Secretary of State said that the Bill would provide a clear and consistent formula. The clarity of that formula is open to doubt. It starts promisingly at the commencement of schedule 1 by saying:

"The formula is . . . MR = AG – CB."

There follow several pages of similar equations. There is plenty of scope for doubt and complexity.

I share the anxiety of the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) about so much being left to secondary legislation. For example, schedule 1(5) says that net and exempt income shall be

"calculated or estimated in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State."

The same will apply to protected income. For the all-important element of housing costs, we read in schedule 1(8):

"the amount of housing costs to be taken into account for prescribed purposes . . . is . . . not to exceed such amount (if any) as may be prescribed by, or determined in accordance with, the regulations."

Consistency is important, but so are clarity and flexibility. I agreed with much of what the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said about the need for discretion. All manner of difficulties face my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in drawing up the regulations on how net income, exempt income, protected income and reasonable housing costs will be calculated.

For example, how will benefits in kind be dealt with? In the case of free accommodation, they could be significant. How will the cost of travelling to work be dealt with? Absent parents who have lumbered themselves with inescapable commitments for inessentials may be open to criticism. They may have frittered away money or entered into unwise commitments, but all too often those commitments are inescapable. To what extent, if at all, will the earnings or capital of new spouses or cohabitees of the custodial parents and absent parents be taken into account? In my experience, that is often a major emotional flashpoint.

Another important question is how the varying costs of access by the absent parent to the child will be taken into account. In some cases, the absent parent may live in the same town as the child, and those costs will be small. However, if the absent parent lives in London and the child and custodial parent live in, say, Cumbria or Dundee, those access costs will be significant. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must take full account of such difficulties when drawing up the regulations. If they are not taken into account, serious injustices will arise, and there is a risk that the measure will become unworkable.

How will differences in the cost of living in different parts of the country be dealt with? That is important generally, but particularly when it comes to housing costs. Imagine, for example, a child support officer in Falkirk assessing—as he or she may have to do—the reasonable amount of housing costs for someone living in Southampton, London, Inverness or Barnstaple. There will be huge variations, and it is important that they are taken properly into account. A formula that is too rigid could lead to injustice and a breakdown of the system. It must be realised that the problems which will face child support officers will be much more complex and difficult to deal with than the considerable problems currently faced by DSS officials.

Another major concern relates to the wisdom of setting up a Child Support Agency that will deal only with the maintenance of the child. The maintenance of a child is closely linked with—it is usually inescapable from—the maintenance of the mother, yet we seem to have a system in which maintenance of the child is dealt with by the Child Support Agency, whereas maintenance of the mother will continue to be dealt with by the court. That creates not only a wasteful system of duplication, but also gives rise to the difficulties inherent in a system in which two different agencies deal with basically the same problem.

One must also take into account the fact that, when a marriage breaks down, the maintenance of children is closely linked with the issue of what should be done with the matrimonial home. The courts will deal with the matrimonial home. A problem that must be faced fair and square is the fact that, in so many matrimonial settlements, one party—usually the father—must yield all or part of his interest in the former matrimonial home to provide a home for the mother and child.

I raise those anxieties not in a destructive manner—that would be wholly wrong because I support the thrust of the Bill—but because I am anxious to be as constructive as possible. However, there are difficulties, and I hope that the Government will monitor the Bill carefully. I see the Child Support Agency as only a first step in the highly necessary task of reforming the child and general family maintenance system. I hope and expect that, eventually, the Child Support Agency will be integrated into a new system of family courts.

8.17 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Several hon. Members have said that the measure should have been introduced a decade ago. At the weekend, I spoke about the Bill to a woman in Glasgow who brought up three boys on her own, having been deserted by a callous, despicable husband. She said that if such a Bill had been introduced 30 years ago, much of the misery that she encountered in bringing up her three children alone with no help from her ex-husband might have been diminished by adequate maintenance payments from that scoundrel.

One may have reservations about the Bill and some people have serious reservations about it. I recently received a letter from the chairperson of Inverclyde Women's Aid who expressed serious concerns about the Bill, inter alia,

"the proposal that lone mothers may lose benefit for refusing to name the father of their child. Women who feel unable to give these details refuse, in the majority of cases, in order to protect themselves and their children. Those who have suffered violence in the past have no wish to experience further misery, or harassment, by causing the wrath of an absent parent. Moreover many lone parents feel that their treatment at the hands of the D.S.S. is often both unfeeling and intensive. The fear is that this situation will deteriorate further, if the new rules are introduced."

I certainly hope that in the fullness of time those fears prove groundless. That fine woman goes on to say:

"What lone parents need are policies to enable them to make choices which are to the benefit of their children. To be able to stay at home and care for their children, if this is their priority. For those who wish to work, better training and educational opportunities, more flexible employment, freely available childcare, including after school care, and improvements to the Benefits System which prevents lone parents being able to work are desperately needed."

In fairness to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), I received from him a sympathetic response to my letter which was prompted by the letter that I received from the chairperson of Inverclyde Women's Aid. In that comprehensive and lengthy letter, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said:

"As you may know, we announced in the House of Lords in discussions of the Child Support Bill that where the child support officer is satisfied on the evidence available to him that there is a risk of violence to the parent or child this will be accepted as good cause for not helping to seek maintenance. You will no doubt be aware that our proposal to reduce benefit where a caring person refuses, without good cause, to co-operate in obtaining maintenance no longer forms part of the Child Support Bill following a vote at Committee stage in the Lords. The Government are giving careful thought to the views expressed in the debate and considering the right way forward on this important issue in light of the points made."

The women who so selfishly give up many hours of their free time to help those who are colloquially known in my constituency as battered women speak from years of experience. Their concerns must, in the first instance, be taken on board by the local Member of Parliament. Indirectly, those worries must be taken into serious consideration by the Minister and the members of the Committee. I suspect that I shall not be invited to serve on the Committee—perhaps I am expressing a hope. I suspect that I shall be invited, given the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

What about women and children in women's refuges? I hope that they will be treated with the sensitivity and compassion that they so manifestly deserve. I listened carefully to the remarks about women who live in terror of violent, estranged husbands, ex-husbands or former cohabitees. At a recent surgery, a young woman came to see me with evident bruises on her face. She was accompanied by two lovely little girls, "weans" as she called them. All three of them live in fear of the woman's violent, drunken ex-husband who arrived on the doorstep two weeks ago. The young woman rightly refused to give him access, but he simply kicked the front door down and punched my young constituent in front of her children. I naturally alerted the police and social workers. The young woman said that she did not want anything from her ex-husband, but that she was frightened and wanted to live in another town if she could. She had spent some time in a refuge.

The utmost compassion must be given to such fine decent constituents who deserve protection from their—I suppose that I use the term wrongly—psychopathic husbands. Their children, who do not have the power of the vote, should be given our spontaneous and instinctive protection.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

I am mainly concerned with the Scottish part of the Bill. The utmost consideration must be given to those who fear physical retribution if they give certain information about their violent ex-spouses to the Department of Social Security. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary is listening with his customary courteous attentiveness and I shall ask him a few questions. Earlier, I asked about children in Scotland and the Secretary of State said that he could confirm that, by that curious process of osmosis, clause 7 was, to some extent, shaped by some clauses in the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Bill, which I understand is in the other place. If that is so, it is right and proper. I also asked the Secretary of State about the representation of young children in such cases vis-a-vis clause 7. I was promised a letter or perhaps a response from the Minister when he replies. Clause 7 is fairly lengthy and, I think I am right in saying, deals exclusively with children in Scotland. I shall be interested to see how it is developed.

Clause 12 deals with child support officers. What sort of training are such officers to receive, or are they already highly experienced? In cases that demand it, will they work closely with local social work departments or, south of the border, local social services departments?

Earlier, in relation to clauses 20, 21, 22 and 23, I asked my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), who professed to be an ex-solicitor, about the position when someone sought legal aid. If someone appears in front of an appeals tribunal, will he be assisted by a local welfare rights officer, as is the case with social security appeals tribunals, or could such an appellant obtain the services of a lawyer? That is an important question, particularly in the light of clause 40. In asking it, I am not seeking to diminish the role of welfare rights officers in appeals tribunals. In my part of Strathclyde, the local welfare rights officers employed by the social work departments of the council are excellent advocates. In a number of recent cases they have taken decisions of appeals tribunals to a commissioner and won on appeal. However, it may well be that, in some instances it would be more fitting for a lawyer to represent someone in those circumstances.

The Bill has some fine qualities, but parts of it make me shudder. I am particularly concerned about clause 26 and I am glad that the Secretary of State has returned to the Chamber, despite his modest disclaimer about his lack of knowledge of Scots law and the social security system north of the border. He was being unduly modest. I think that I am right in saying that he has several times met members of the Association of Directors of Social Work in Scotland. I apprised the Secretary of State of certain procedures and practices in Strathclyde social work department in 1985 when he and I were members of the Committee that examined a social security Bill.

Clause 26 is peculiarly Scottish and deals with the power of the Secretary of State for Scotland to initiate or defend actions of declarity. It is an important clause and, although I am not a lawyer, it seems to be deficient. It states:

"(1) Where—

(a) a child support officer is considering whether to make a maintenance assessment with respect to a person who is alleged to be a parent of the child, or one of the children, in question ("the alleged parent");

(b) the alleged parent denies that he is a parent of the child in question; and

(c) the child support officer is satisfied that the case does not fall within one of those set out in section 24(2),

the Secretary of State may bring an action for declarator of parentage under section 7 of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986."

Section 7(1) of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986 states:

"An action for declarator of parentage, non-parentage, legitimacy, legitimation of illegitimacy may be brought in the Court of Session of the sheriff court.

(2) Such an action may be brought in the Court of Session if and only if the child was born in Scotland or the alleged or presumed parent or the child—

(a) is domiciled in Scotland on the date when the action is brought;".

Clause 26 contains no reference to the preceding section of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act. Section 7 is pointless without section 6 which is headed: "Determination of parentage by blood sample."

Section 6(1) states:

"This section applies where, for the purpose of obtaining evidence relating to the determination of parentage in civil proceedings, a blood sample is sought by a party to the proceedings or by a curator ad litem."

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose*——

Dr. Godman: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment, unless he is making it clear that I should finish. It seems that I will be appointed to the Committee by this honourable and old friend of mine.

This is an important matter, as I am sure the Secretary of State agrees. I remind him, as I did earlier, that section 6 of the 1986 Act has been changed by section 70 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 which is headed:

"Blood and other samples in civil proceedings."

It states:

"(1) In any civil proceedings to which this section applies, the court may (whether or not on application made to it) request a party to the proceedings—

(a) to provide a sample of blood or other body fluid or of body tissue for the purpose of laboratory analysis;

(b) to consent to the taking of such a sample from a child in relation to whom the party has power to give such consent . . .

the court may draw from the refusal or failure such adverse inference, if any, in relation to the subject matter of the proceedings as seems to it to be appropriate.

(3) In section 6 of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986 (determination of parentage by blood sample)—

(a) in subsection (1), for the words "blood sample" there shall be substituted "sample of blood or other body fluid or of body tissue";".

I emphasise that in that context we are talking about DNA testing. That is what is meant by "body tissue". That was conceded by the Secretary of State for Scotland and other Scottish Ministers in the Standing Committee, of which I was a member, on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. I warn hon. Members that that Committee finished on the very last day of last year's Session and I suspect that some hon. Members are looking forward to a similar prospect with this Bill.

If the Bill incorporates section 7 of that fine piece of Scottish legislation, why not incorporate section 6 which would allow for DNA testing? The Bill deals with blood samples. Why should it not deal with body tissue? If I am a member of the Committee examining the Bill, I shall table an amendment to that effect, because clause 26 is fatally flawed.

I hope that in his reply the Minister will deal with clause 35 which is about diligences. If it is to introduce poinding and warrant sales, why should it not introduce an arrestment of wages measure? There is no reason for distinguishing between the two. In Scotland they largely go together, for example, in relation to the poll tax.

Clause 40 gives the Lord Advocate the power to allow an appeal to be heard by the Court of Session or a sheriff court. Surely in such cases legal aid should be given to people on low incomes. What is the legal position of decisions of a sheriff court or the Court of Session where the absent parent is domiciled in England, Wales or elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

The Bill contains some good provisions, but in some respects it is woefully deficient. We are dealing with the protection of extremely vulnerable people, and I hope that Conservative Members will have the decency to support some of the amendments that will undoubtedly be tabled during an examination of the Bill.

8.48 pm

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I apologise for my rather intermittent attendance in this debate. I shall not follow the no doubt important arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). The only thought that forced itself upon me as I listened to the hon. Gentleman was that it must be rather complicated to have in Scotland a quite separate law governing such matters from the law in England, given the propensity of people to marry across the border. I know that it is sacrilege to suggest that we should in any way undermine the constitution or the Act of Union, but plainly there are complications.

I welcome the Bill, especially because it seems to be part of the growing concern within the Government and in the country about the many problems facing families bringing up children. As the years pass, I increasingly feel that that is about the most important issue facing politicians and the Government. It is perhaps one of the most intractable, and we are rather chary of grasping the nettle. The Government have shown increasing concern about these issues. That is clear from their sensible conversion on child benefit, or at least their maintenance of the status quo in that regard. The Bill is a serious attempt to deal with a very serious problem.

It is rather regrettable that the Opposition feel that they must divide the House this evening. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said that the Bill was useful. Admittedly, he then added that the Bill was seriously flawed, but the essential point is that hon. Members on both sides of the House accept that the Bill is useful. While important topics must be discussed in Standing Committee and there is the still unresolved question of what to do about the other place, the House could give the Bill a unanimous Second Reading.

We must progress from general principles to consider some of the particular problems. The Child Poverty Action Group has stated that there is general agreement that the principle enshrined in the Bill—that absent parents have a continuing financial responsibility towards their children—is entirely sound, and it is right that we should deal with it.

There is widespread acceptance of the notion of a Child Support Agency. People have commented on that and suggested ways in which it might be developed. That is a direct proposal by the Government which should receive the backing of the House.

The debate has shown that the concern is about the effect of the proposals on parents on low incomes, on children in second families and on lone parents. Much of our discussion today—as no doubt will be the case in Standing Committee—has been about such issues. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is serious and genuine, as we all know he invariably is when he talks about the safeguards that he has tried to build into the system if there is to be a benefit reduction for those who do not co-operate by naming other partners.

Listening to my right hon. Friend's opening comments confirmed that impression. Anyone who knows my right hon. Friend's approach to policy will know that, when he says that he is serious about ensuring that we have the right checks and balances, he means it. I am sure that we are capable of producing legislation that will embody that aim.

On the essential moral principle, it must be right to state that parents must take some responsibility for their actions. If we accept that, a total exemption from the principle of the least well-off is unwise. Of course it is easy to argue that those people who are on income support or who are by definition among the poorest in the country are going to be hard pressed by anything that affects them. We can understand that. It is also easy to argue that we are talking about children, and that they cannot be blamed for the aberrations and actions of their parents. I understand those arguments, but life is not as simple as that.

As I have said, basic family life is being almost cripplingly undermined, and we must think very hard about how to reverse that trend. Other hon. Members—certainly Conservative Members—have quoted some of the statistics provided in briefing material that was recently sent to hon. Members. Those terrifying statistics show the extent of divorce, single parenthood and the poverty and unhappiness induced by the collapse of family life.

I do not want to argue that all single parents are in some way guilty people; nor do I argue that all single parents are incapable of bringing up children perfectly. We know very well that not many single parents can help their position, and that many of them are very good parents. However, it is inescapably true that, as a generality, it is much better to raise children according to traditional family life if that is at all possible. It is right that the state should declare that as the centrepiece of its policy on family life.

There should be a moral bias in the Bill in favour of children and of the way of life which, over the centuries, has generally proved the most effective way of raising children. From that it follows that, when we legislate in that area, we should be prepared to translate that bias into the formulation of the Bill. We must find ways to check the misery, crime and instability thrown up by the present pattern of family life. It is important that the Bill should do that.

No doubt the Opposition will say, as they say about almost every social problem, that more resources are needed. It would be foolish to deny that more resources are often a vital part of social policies. However, the Opposition continually over-simplify matters when they constantly talk of more resources. They are not prepared to consider other aspects.

The measures in the Bill that are most criticised are not primarily related to public expenditure. I do not believe

[Sir Timothy Raison]

that the Treasury has been breathing all that heavily down the neck of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. We must not delude ourselves that it never stops breathing heavily, but it is not simply a question of trying to save money. The Government believe that we must make people feel a sense of responsibility for their actions. That is the beginning and the end of the Bill, and I support that principle.

Certain aspects of the Bill may be tough, and it is important that the Standing Committee examines the details. The Committee must face up to the question of what to do about the other place and clause 22 as it was. The Committee stage will be particularly important.

The basic principle behind the Bill is correct—to make people, even poor people, recognise that, if they have children in a casual or irresponsible way, they must face up to the consequences and not palm them off on the Treasury, the DSS or anyone else. That is why I am sympathetic to the approach taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the Bill. I do not follow the Opposition's concept described by the hon. Member for Oldham, West as "zero-rating" the contribution of poor absentee parents. We do not want a swingeing, vindictive and punitive approach, but people should bear the consequences of their actions and a charge is reasonable.

I shall not say whether the original version of clause 22 was right. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken eloquently about that matter. It is quite clear from the time that it has taken my right hon. Friend to consider it that the matter is complicated. It is extremely important to get it right. The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) talked about the case for an incentive as opposed to a reduction. That is at least worth considering. I shall not say whether I believe it to be right—I have not thought about it carefully enough—but that is a matter that the Government must carefully consider.

I remain of the view that it is crucial that it should be demonstrated that there is a responsibility. Because the Bill does that, I am happy to support it.

8.58 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): There is a chorus of approval for the areas where the extra employees will work, but none of those areas is in Wales. If there are to be an extra 2,000 employees, one would like some of them to be in Wales. As there is great unemployment and deprivation in Wales, I should have thought that at least one centre ought to be there.

This measure is another example of the Conservative Government pursuing the task that they have followed throughout their years in power—that is, the search for the scrounger. Often it is a mythical scrounger. This time yesterday we were talking about the £10 billion that the Government had thrown away on the poll tax legislation, and about £450 million to be spent on introducing the council tax. Enormous sums have been thrown away.

We also know of the Government's lack of activity in pursuit of the real scroungers in our society—that is, those who evade and avoid income tax. As always, the Government behave with energy and speed—the speed of a striking cobra—in pursuit of those whom they believe are gaining very small sums, but when it comes to pursuing the large-scale scroungers in our society, the income tax evaders and avoiders, they move with the speed of an arthritic sloth.

We support much that is in the Bill. I am not certain of the moral basis to which the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison) referred. The main argument is about clause 22. Worries both here and in the other place have centred on the hardship that it will certainly cause to families who are already under severe financial and emotional strain. It has other implications for DSS officials and the appeal tribunals who will have to administer it, and they are equally disturbing. The clause will apply to any parent on income support who failed, without good cause—I noticed that the Secretary of State hesitated and replaced "good cause" by "good reason", but I do not know whether that was significant—to provide whatever information the Secretary of State considers necessary to trace and extract maintenance from the absent parent.

Some cases would be referred to a child support officer, who would decide whether to issue a reduced benefit direction and, if so, by how much the benefit should be reduced and for how long. There would be a right of appeal to the social security tribunal. As justification, today and in the past the Government have drawn an analogy with the voluntary unemployment provisions under which similar penalties, such as disqualification from unemployment benefit and a reduction in income support for 26 weeks, are permitted if someone fails to provide good cause or has voluntarily left a job. That analogy is dangerous and should serve as a warning to us. The voluntary unemployment rules, as well as causing severe hardship, are a headache for all those concerned in their administration. Although adjudication officers have no discretion as to the amount of the penalty, they have discretion on the crucial question of its duration—that is, anything from one day to 26 weeks.

The regulations offer no guidance on how that discretion is to be exercised, nor is such guidance available from any other source. The Secretary of State cannot provide it. In principle, adjudication officers, and presumably child support officers, are independent of him. In practice, however, in the majority of cases, adjudication officers are floundering in a policy vacuum, and they impose the maximum period of 26 weeks. That leads to horrific problems for six months of the year when the person is deprived of benefit. Appeal tribunals often find themselves in similar difficulty in trying to interpret what the fixed period should be. In the absence of any rational criteria, wildly inconsistent decisions are made.

If the Government decide to restore the old clause 22, the problems will be even greater because the amount as well as the duration of the benefit reduction will be discretionary. The maximum is likely to be prescribed in the regulations. As was confirmed earlier, the Government have suggested that the maximum reduction would be 20 per cent. of the adult income support level or £7·95 per week. That is a huge and horrific sum to be taken from a family's disposable income, and there is no indication as to the maximum period forwhich the penalty will be imposed.

Within the limits, adjudication officers and tribunals will have complete discretion, without any guidance on how to exercise it. At one extreme, they might impose a maximum reduction for an indefinite period; at the other, they may refuse to make any reduction at all. Their discretion will not extend to deciding whether the

Secretary of State's demands for information were necessary or reasonable, which they may not be, but officers will have to decide whether the claimant has failed to supply that information or has given false information and, if so, whether he or she had "good cause". That phrase is another celebrated area for confusion and debate and will be absolutely crucial. The Secretary of State will have to apply his own criteria. A body of case law on "good cause" would emerge from the cases which go to the social security commissioners on appeal but would not extend to decisions on the amount and duration of benefit reductions.

The Government may be tempted to circumvent those difficulties by reintroducing the old clause 22, without the discretionary element, and to lay down a fixed penalty regardless of the circumstances. The Secretary of State talked about experience and about seeing how things work out in the multiplicity of cases that will arise. A fixed penalty would, however, be even more objectionable. The wise counsel would be to leave out the old clause 22 and to let experience show whether the penal provisions that are envisaged are really necessary to protect the taxpayer.

9.6 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am grateful to have caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, especially as I was unable to be present for the early part of the debate and did not hear the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. However, when the Bill began its very early stages in the House, I was sitting behind my right hon. Friend as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, so I am not unaware of the provisions that we are discussing.

Yesterday, as I celebrated 24 years of very happy marriage, I was aware of how lucky I am, when one remembers that between one in three and one in two marriages now breaks down to end in divorce, sadness and unhappiness. Those breakdowns have resulted in a large population of children for whom maintenance is an issue. I gather that maintenance is now an issue for 2 million families. That is sad and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison) said, a reflection on easy marriage, easy divorce, the easy begetting of children and the easy shedding of responsibility on to the welfare state which, all too frequently and all too freely, has been prepared to pick up the pieces.

The Bill sets out to redress the balance between personal responsibility and providing for one's children out of one's own income whether or not the union is maintained, and the state acting as the provider of last resort for those for whom no maintenance is payable. Few cases are sadder than those that come to us, as Members of Parliament, involving constituents who have been deserted and are doing their best to bring up their families, who seek maintenance and who have maintenance orders awarded only to find that the courts are extremely lax in their efforts to enforce maintenance payments. I heard about such a case only last Friday at my surgery. A lady had been seeking to enforce a maintenance order, but just before the order was registered and the summons served, the absent parent moved on. The order from the local court had gone through no fewer than five courts in London before the summons was close to being served. The irony is that the man has access to his children and comes to the lady's house to collect them every week, but the court said that the summons could not be served on the man when he was collecting his children for his access period.

The courts have failed in the way in which they provide for maintenance. Some of the maintenance awards have been capricious and erratic. We are told of absent fathers with identical incomes paying anything from £5 to £50 per week in child maintenance. The setting up of the Child Support Agency promises to provide a fair and balanced system which will hold at arm's length partners for whom the bitterness of marriage break-up has proved more than they can cope with. If only because of that, I welcome the Bill and I hope that it will be given a fair wind in the House. I bitterly regret that the Opposition cannot bring themselves to give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading and send it to Committee where it would be subject to amendment. I give the Bill my support and I hope that the House will do likewise.

9.10 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Everyone who has listened to the debate—it is a pity that there were not more here to do so—will agree that it has been conducted in a thoughtful fashion. Many hon. Members have expressed reservations about the Bill, some of them Conservative Members but mostly Opposition Members. Nobody has objected to the principle, which is, wherever possible, to make parents financially responsible for their children. The reservations and objections that have been expressed have dealt with the application of that principle and the way in which it is felt to inhibit and adversely affect certain sections of the people to whom it might be applied. In addition to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), those who have expressed reservations include the hon. Members for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), although he supported the Bill, and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) and my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes). All the agencies which have sent us briefings on the subject and which have been concerned with the matter have also expressed reservations about the application of the Bill.

One of the important features that we are discussing in the Bill is children and the effect that divorce, separation and poverty can have on them. Less than a year ago, the House passed the Children Act, which comes into force in October. That said that the interests of the children had to be paramount in any area where they had to be cared for, in any area applicable to them.

Now we are being asked to accept further legislation, which, in my view and I think in that of my hon. Friends, runs counter to that view. Whatever the Bill's intention may be, it is not putting children first—the view expressed by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson); she got it wrong—it is putting the Treasury first and children second.

The Children Act was accepted unanimously and welcomed by the House. We were told that it was a step in the direction of family courts and a more integrated approach to dealing with issues relating to children and the welfare of their families.

[Miss Joan Lestor]

The application of family life and its importance was a point made by the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison), who supports the Bill, but I think that it runs counter to his support for and his interest in family life.

It seemed clear and logical during the passage of the Children Act that matters such as maintenance and access should be addressed within that wider context, because we were told that it was a move in the direction of family courts. But this Bill looks at the issue of lone parents and maintenance quite separately. That has been one of the main concerns of the various children's agencies and others who have been sending us briefing on that.

It is also important that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West was speaking, and as questions were asked of the Secretary of State, it became apparent that, after all this time, there is still no formula for applying the principles of the Bill. We are being asked to vote for something without knowing how it will work. We are told that it will come up later and that it will be taken into account.

Last February, the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) described the Maintenance Enforcement Bill as the hors d'oeuvre before a good lunch—the good lunch being the Child Support Bill. We were debating then, as now, family poverty and the extreme emotional distress suffered by parents and their children following the break-up of a family. Set against that background, the remarks of the hon. Member for Chelmsford were inappropriate and downright insensitive. Although I am sure it was not intended by the Secretary of State, that lack of sensitivity and understanding of the lives of the people whom the Bill will affect is shared by certain members of the Government —although right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have been at pains to point out what happens when families break up. Mention has been made of distressing court cases and relationships being torn apart.

Tonight, we are supposed to be addressing the primary needs of children and their upbringing by adults who should be able to provide emotional and material necessities. We are supposed to be specifically considering ways in which we can help parents who, for whatever reason, cannot share in the day-to-day responsibilities of child rearing. We are talking in the main of women, who often live in poverty, misery, and fear—all of which they share with their children.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West described our reservations about the Bill. We do not challenge the principle that non-residential parents should have a continuing financial responsibility for their children, where they can meet it: our concern is the priority given to that principle over all other considerations. The proposals do not go far enough in addressing the problems of family poverty. Three quarters of a million lone parent families in the United Kingdom rely on income support. The Bill will bring no improvement to the living standards of many of their children, because maintenance will be deducted pound for pound from their income support.

Much play has been made about incentives. Many lone parents living on income support stand to lose certain housing and other benefits that it brings if it is supplanted by maintenance. Some lone parents may continue to enjoy entitlement to some level of support, but maintenance will often represent no real gain, and could even result in a loss.

My understanding is that the Child Support Agency will be left to apply the formula, which will leave the door open to all kinds of abuses by men—and also some women —with considerable financial means. They may choose to pay less than they already do by going to the agency, and the child will consequently suffer.

Many separated or divorced women have negotiated with their former partners, without rancour, an arrangement whereby they forgo any maintenance but are allowed to keep the family home for themselves and their children. We must bear that in mind when we consider figures on the number of people who do not receive maintenance. The Bill could undermine that principle. If a dispute arises, or if the man or woman is pressurised to pay maintenance, he or she may decide to sell their property. Other considerations will come into play, which may serve to undermine a well-ordered and well-organised arrangement between the man and the woman. Does the Secretary of State really intend that such arrangements should be replaced by a scheme in which one of the partners is forced to pay maintenance?

Families Need Fathers is one of the many organisations that is concerned about the question of shared access arrangements, whereby a child lives with one partner—usually the mother—during the week, but with his or her father at weekends and during holidays. The father may not pay any maintenance—perhaps because he cannot afford to do so; he may have another family to support. The question of second families has not been raised very much tonight, but the right hon. Member for Aylesbury talked about the breakdown of family life, and its changing patterns. I fear that we are in danger of impoverishing the second family to provide for the first.

Often there is shared access. The child may spend weekends and school holidays with its father—it may be the mother, but it is normally the father. In such cases that is seen as the father's contribution to the child's maintenance, although no formal handing over of money is involved. Are we saying that that arrangement must change—that a formal maintenance order must be made, disrupting and undermining the understanding way in which the couple may have dealt with separation or divorce?

Questions about legal aid for appeal cases have not yet been answered. The Government have made much of people's ability to appeal, but unless legal aid is available, the parent with the most money will be able to afford legal representation, while the other parent will not.

We accept the principle that, whenever possible, men and women should share the financial arrangements for their children. Given the number of reservations that have been expressed today, however, cannot the Government produce another Bill that takes those reservations into account? I fear that that will not be done, and we shall therefore seek to amend the Bill in Committee. The Government, however, must surely recognise that our objections are far greater than they expected at the outset. Because they have not been able to think through the implications, much of the legislation is to be dealt with in statutory instruments and the like.

Family breakdown and divorce are distressing for all the parties concerned, particularly the women. The current interpretation of the Bill could result in unwelcome access. It has been pointed out that many men will have agreed not to see their children. I shall not comment on that: I am not God, and I do not sit in judgment. Men say, "Let us

call it a day"; their wives say, "All right. I will not come to you for maintenance, as I know you have another family and other responsibilities." If the maintenance money is the one thing that the man will lose, however, he will say, "I want to see my children." I do not think that the complexities have been fully understood.

Whatever we do about access, we must not link it to maintenance. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead pointed out, access to their parents can be very important to children. Many men pay maintenance without having access; others who do not pay maintenance will demand access out of spite. Many women live in fear of being forced to reawaken a relationship that they had thought was dead, along with the fears that accompanied it. I doubt the abilities and the sensitivities of those who will sit in judgment and who will ignore what has been said in deciding whether those fears are justified. If women feel such fears, that should be good enough for all of us, and we should decide against pursuing the matter further.

Much has been said—rightly—about the identification of fathers. Only a small number of mothers refuse to name the fathers of their children. According to the official figures, seven out of 10 already comply with the DSS requests for information about the absent parent. The few who do not name the fathers usually have good reasons. They may need to make a clean break; they may want to avoid contact with a violent partner; they may not know the father's whereabouts, or hope for an improvement in the relationship that might lead to a reconciliation. Financial penalties meted out to the mother for non-compliance in that respect would automatically punish the child at the same time. Such a move would be neither morally nor economically justifiable.

The Government must take into consideration the fact that, whatever the appeal procedures may be, I know that the Government have considered the matter again, because there are now more safeguards—if one penalises the woman because she refuses to name the father of her child and has good reasons for not naming him, one also punishes the child. The £7 a week that may be taken away from the woman is the cost of one shoe for a child of six or seven years of age, judging by what I recently paid for a pair of shoes for my grand-daughter. That is a lot of money and represents a tremendous proportion of such a mother's income. If a woman is prepared to lose such a sum because she will not name the father of her child, she must have good reason for refusing to do so. The Government must take that on board.

The valid point was made that some children will have to be taken into care because the woman will not be able to manage. We do not want that to happen. The Government have often been proud to say that there are now fewer children in the care of the local authorities than has been the case for many years. They will now force a return to the previous position, because women will not be able to manage.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) mentioned children with disabilities. Although the Secretary of State gave him a partial answer, it did not meet the problems and the difficulties, or the anxieties of organisations such as Mencap. It is important for us to remember that children with disabilities have special and additional needs which we cannot allow to be overlooked in the Bill. The Secretary of State has said that that omission will be looked at. We must establish adequate levels of maintenance for those children. The view of Mencap is that almost every lone parent whose child has a mental handicap will be forced to appeal against the maintenance bill if the proposed formula is applied, unless the extra costs are taken into consideration.

Children with disabilities, as we all know, have many more difficulties than children with none. A lone parent with a child who has a disability often has to bear far greater costs in bringing up that child. The children often require extra heating and extra laundry, and their parents often cannot go to work. They may require relief care and special adaptations to their homes. We must take those factors into consideration.

Mencap has made the point that it is unacceptable that parents of such children should have to troop through the courts to gain reasonable support. Although the Secretary of State gave some assurances on that, he must consider the matter in greater detail.

The United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which the Government have still to ratify, stresses:

"In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

It seems abundantly clear that the interests of the Treasury and the need in public relations terms to be seen to be doing something about child poverty—which has doubled under this Government—are being given higher priority than the interests of children.

I commend to the House a recent report by the Family Policy Study Centre. It showed that 62 per cent. of all children living with one parent would not benefit from the Bill.

Mr. Thurnham: Then 38 per cent. would.

Miss Lestor: The hon. Gentleman says that 38 per cent. of children would benefit. That depends on how the Bill is applied. If only 38 per cent. of children will benefit, the hue and cry about what it would do for lone parents seems to be sadly misplaced. It seems that 62 per cent. of children will not benefit. If the guarantees about, for example, children with disabilities are not met, an even greater number will not benefit.

The whole issue of child support should be seen within the broader context of legislation to support and strengthen families. That point was made by the right hon. Member for Aylesbury and by other hon. Members. Against a background of poverty, family breakdown and lack of child care and decent employment opportunities, the Government's tinkering with maintenance seems an inadequate response. To some of us, the Government seem to be saying to the taxpayer, "We are going to ensure that you do not have to keep other people's children." That has been said by two or three hon. Members tonight. The provision is not an attack on family poverty—rather, it is a public relations exercise.

Being a responsible parent means much more than just footing the bill. Being a responsible Government means providing a supportive structure that will keep families out of poverty, minimise conflicts when families break down and, above all, protect children when their well-being is threatened. In that context, I look forward to proposals to reform the social fund, increase basic levels of income support and restore the value of child benefit, all of which could do so much to reduce family poverty.

The Government suddenly tell us how many lone parents are living off the state, saying that people with low

[Miss Lestor]

incomes are forced to keep other men's children because those men do not face up to their financial responsibilities. Yet, as has already been pointed out, severe cuts at the DSS have affected the number of people employed in collecting money from liable parents. The numbers have gone down and down. Both resources and personnel were undermined, so that money that should have been collected was not collected—the Government's own reports say that. Now, suddenly, they say, "Oh, look—this is absolutely terrible. We must do something and go and catch those men." If the DSS had been properly funded, if it had had a proper level of personnel and a proper structure, much of that maintenance would have been collected already.

We have concentrated a great deal on lone parents, and it is right that we should do so. It is such people, mainly women, who will be trapped by the Bill. People often present lone parents either as women who will not name the father of their child or as women who have irresponsibly conceived a child, who do not know who the father is and who simply feel that the state should keep them.

But many women I know who are lone parents—whether they have been married or not, whether they are young girls or not, and whether they had a stable union or not—say over and over again that they would like to go to work. They would like not to be dependent on income support or on maintenance from the father, whom they may not want to see again and who may have been no good. "But," they ask, "how can I go to work when the cost of child care is so high? I would have to earn £80 or £90 a weeek more than my sisters who are not in this position, to be able to pay for child care and to make up for the fact that I would lose many benefits if I came off income support."

If only the Government would get Departments to talk to each other about that problem, and do something about the accessibility of child care—for everybody, preferably, but here we are talking about a special group of women who are lone parents, many of whom would like to go to work but find the cost of child care prohibitive—there would be a transformation not only in the well-being of those women and their children but in the financial burden that the Government seemed so concerned that the taxpayer has to bear.

The Government are talking about a disregard of £15 a week, but that would make almost no contribution towards meeeting the £60, £70 or £80 or more a week that full-time day care for children costs in many parts of the country. That is one of the real problems that the Bill does not consider, but it is important both in terms of money and in terms of the psychological well-being of the mother and the child.

Too much is left to regulations. We do not have enough detail in the Bill. We do not know what we are being asked to support. Throughout the debate, the Secretary of State has said, "We shall bring in regulations to deal with that," or, "We shall have to look at that again." We cannot support a Bill that is so deficient in terms of the detail that we are asked to endorse.

That is why I have suggested that the Secretary of State take on board our various criticisms. We have tabled a reasoned amendment and, if the Bill goes through, we shall seek to amend it in Committee. I ask my hon. Friends and the rest of the House to support our reasoned amendment and try to bring into the Bill more light and more real concern for lone parents and their children.

9.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): In summing up what has been a high quality debate, I first put on record my appreciation of the support that I have received from my hon. Friends the Members for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine), my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). The geographic spread of the constituencies of my hon. Friends who have spoken in the debate perhaps shows the wide appreciation and support for the measure in Britain.

I also thank the many Opposition Members who made considered, careful and, in many cases, thoughtful speeches. The Committee stage has been put into a useful perspective. No one would disagree that the debate has signalled the giving of life to the ideas contained in the White Paper, "Children Come First", now embodied in the Child Support Bill. I emphasise my appreciation of the wide public support for the Bill.

I took objection to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) when she accused the Government of not dealing with the incomes of low-income families. I look at her across the Dispatch Box and wonder whether she has noted that since the social security changes came into operation in 1988 we increased by some £400 million in real terms up to 1 April 1991 the money which is paid to families on low incomes. I shall deal with some of the other measures that we shall take under the Bill to address the points that she made.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: No, I should like to make progress. The hon. Gentleman had a fair opportunity earlier. It is now my turn to reply on behalf of the Government. I shall perhaps give way to him later when I have made progress.

The proposals, which command wide support, reflect the continuing responsibilities of those who bring a child into the world for its moral, physical and economic welfare. That was summed up for me in a succinct phrase from a pamphlet that I read recently called, "Happy Families". It said:

> "Whilst you can divorce your husband or wife you cannot divorce your children".

No one who saw the BBC2 television programme last week on divorce and listened to the interviews with children can be left in any doubt about the impact that divorce has on these young ones or the problems faced by members of a single-parent family.

While the Bill cannot reconstitute families, it can contribute to the economic well-being of those families. I suppose that it was naive of me to think that the Opposition would not try to find some way of undermining in the mind of the public the wholly honourable intentions of the Bill. The Opposition's so-called reasoned amendment is the type of political deceit that we have come to expect from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). The Opposition want

the respectability of not directly opposing the principles of the Bill, but they could not care two hoots about the effect of airing their criticisms on the public perception of these measures. The Opposition's reasoned amendment is not accurate and I shall address later some of the points that have been made.

It is important to see the Bill as a package which seeks to create a legislative framework to ensure a proper line of financial support which reaches the children of a family. It seeks to achieve a proper sharing of the task between the parents and the taxpayer, who currently has to shoulder the financial burden by funding income support and family credit payments at a level which is higher than necessary because those with a responsibility to pay maintenance for their children do not honour their obligations.

The Bill looks to the future and signals further changes which will address some of the points made by the hon. Member for Eccles in her concluding comments. She chastised the Government on child care. It worries me that she may not have looked in the intense detail that it deserves at example 10 in the White Paper, which deals with the very point that she made. The Government have been criticised today for not providing the fine detail, but when it is put before the Opposition they choose not to look at it.

Example 10 relates to Linda, a lone parent with a daughter, Alison, who is six. Linda is receiving income support and is now ready to go to work—just like the example cited by the hon. Member for Eccles. On income support Linda would have a net income of just over £90 per week. Without the benefits of the proposals contained in the Bill, Linda would require to have a job paying £105 per week. As a result of the changes contained in the Bill relating to family credit, the reduction in the number of hours of work to qualify for benefit and the £15 disregard on maintenance, Linda would only have to accept a job paying as little as £54 a week to be in precisely the same financial position as she was on income support. The important proviso, however, is that she could go on to do better things.

One third of the people who receive an award through family credit do not renew their claim because their payment levels rise. Such are the benefits of the changes that we have introduced and, as a result, family credit will be more easily accessible to those single parent families.

I said earlier that I would give way to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and I believe that now is an appropriate time to do so.

Mr. Frank Field: I cannot recall the example of Linda, but so that the House can appreciate it, can the Under-Secretary tell us how much child care costs were in that example?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman reminded me of that because I forgot to say that in that example £45 per week of in-work costs were allowed for. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman gave me a chance to put the record straight.

Mr. Field *rose*——

Mr. Jack: With respect, the hon. Gentleman has had enough time to put his views to the House, and many of my hon. Friends would like to hear the Government's side of the argument.

We believe that the changes to family credit will help a further 50,000 lone parent families to benefit from the new arrangements. It is important to draw that to the attention of the House as it illustrates the broad approach of the Bill.

I hope that hon. Members will agree that since the White Paper was published, and during the debate on the Bill in another place, the Government have listened carefully to the representations made on a number of the proposals. We have already acted on the requirement to co-operate. We have also taken into account the representations made about the powers of the inspectors, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred today.

I pledge to the House that we shall continue to listen carefully to sensible ideas for improving the Bill in Committee and its remaining stages. We shall honour our obligations to consult widely on the preparation and content of the regulations that will be occasioned by the Bill.

The Bill relates to complex areas of social relationships, and we recognise that it would not be an easy task to get the Bill entirely right at the first attempt. That is why many of its procedural details have been framed in the form of regulations. Should we need to change any of those regulations in the light of experience, that can be done in such a way that it will not affect the Bill's primary purpose of putting children first.

Dr. Godman: The Minister has said that he will listen to sensible suggestions. I have a sensible question on clause 40 and the right of the Lord Advocate to send such appeal cases to the sheriff court or the Court of Session. Will a person on low income be allowed legal aid and entitled to legal representation in either of those courts?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman has raised a detailed and important question relating to Scotland. The Bill contains a Scottish dimension and I shall do my best to answer tonight the long list of questions that the hon. Gentleman has posed. Otherwise, I shall do so by means of correspondence later. I undertake that his questions will not go unanswered.

An overriding issue in the debate has been the Government's policy and attitude to what was formerly known, when the Bill was originally published, as clause 22, dealing with the criteria for exemption from the requirement to co-operation and the sanction that we have said that we wish to introduce in our consideration of the measure.

I wish to share with the House some experiences that I have had in trying to understand the real world in which the Bill will operate. I travelled the length and breadth of Britain talking to our liable relative officers who, contrary to what Opposition Members have said, are actively pursuing the measure, and their excellent efforts will bring an additional £300 million of benefit saving this year.

In talking to those liable relative officers, I drew a number of conclusions. For example, I have had underlined the fact that about 75 per cent. of people under the present arrangements are content to name the father of the child. That is achieved by careful discussion and friendly persuasion by liable relative officers. That will not change under the proposed operation of the Child Support Agency. I assure the hon. Member for Oldham, West that the fact that we shall now have a dedicated agency, without some of the pressures to which he alluded in his

[Mr. Jack]

opening remarks, will mean that this sensitive work can be pursued, initially by friendly discussion, argument and persuasion. It is important to emphasise that and to see the question of benefit sanction as very much a last resort.

In his evidence to the Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State painted an important picture of the Child Support Agency acting as a buffer between the parent with care and the absent parent. The hon. Member for Birkenhead will note those words carefully, for he paid particular attention in the Select Committee to the remarks of my right hon. Friend. That, together with the work of the child support officers, will mean the addition of considerable distancing—the existence of a buffer state—between the parent with care, who may be reluctant initially to name the father, and the need to do something about that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Is the Minister aware that at the surgery in my constituency I am receiving an increasing number of cases of young girls who are pregnant or have young children and who report that the young men in question have absconded? When I have asked if they would mind my writing to the young men pointing out that their girlfriends were expecting children by them, were homeless and were throwing themselves on the mercy of their fellow citizens in an effort to get a roof over their heads, they have been content that I should write.

The Government should press ahead with the Bill to make sure that those who wish to be in receipt of public funds are prepared to name the father. The Bill will send out an important signal to the rest of the world, particularly to feckless young men. That signal is that this country will no longer put up with people transferring their responsibilities to the rest of the taxpaying community.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend makes a powerful and direct point which leads me to further matters that have been raised in the debate. In our consideration of the measure and in discussing the question of distancing the problem for some people of naming the father, we must examine what was said in another place. There, when we announced that in addition to rape, incest or fear of violence, we would seek to find words to insert in the Bill which would also admit the question of harm and distress in terms of the obligation put on the parent with care to name the father, we went a long way indeed towards dealing with an issue that had been the subject of a great deal of representation to us inside and outside the House.

In view of those provisions, the fear that some people may have about naming should be lessened, but we must have some ultimate sanction in the matter. That was put to me in graphic terms by a liable relative officer in Preston, who said, "Anything that affects their benefit money makes them change their minds." That is so. When people realise that there might be withdrawal of a sum of money, however small, they take a different view. As that officer put it to me, "When the measure was first announced, people came to the office in Preston and named the fathers."

Hon. Members should see the question of sanctions and naming as the end of a long and careful process in which proper weight will be given to all the evidence and information taken by child support officers in considering whether a woman has good cause not to name a missing father. I hope that that will reassure hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West spoke about evidence. Where corroborative evidence can be submitted by a parent, it will be welcome. Clearly, the more information that is provided, the better, because the absence of such information would make decision making harder. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are minded by the remarks that have been made on that sensitive subject.

The hon. Members for Oldham, West, for Birkenhead, and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that those on income support will not be better off under those arrangements. That goes to the heart of whether there should be a form of maintenance disregard for parents in receipt of that benefit. Most women who want to provide a better standard of living for their children would far rather do so by going back to work than by staying on benefit. We do not intend to try to weld them permanently to income support. As I said, the changes in family credit will allow people to move much more easily towards that benefit once those arrangements are in place. We have asked lone parents what they want to do and they have communicated to us that they would like their opportunities to be improved by going back to work. If a disregard in income support were introduced, the step back into work would be so much greater for people to take. On that basis, I cannot see the logic of the proposals of the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I shall conclude my remarks because the hon. Gentleman may be interested in responding to this point. He said that his party wished to have a form of disregard but, when pressed by my hon. Friends to say how much it would cost, he failed to answer. Perhaps he could select from this list. If he agrees to a £5 maintenance disregard, it will cost £85 million; if he advocates a £10 disregard, it will cost £170 million; a £15 disregard will cost £250 million. In picking one of those options, will he say what other amendments to his policies he would make if he wishes to pursue that line?

Mr. Meacher: I wanted to ask about lone parents who have very young children and no opportunity to go back to work. Does the Minister suggest that only mothers who go back to work should be given an incentive? Why should not mothers with very young children have an incentive? Does not that mean that there should be some maintenance disregard?

Mr. Jack: From our research, the clear intention is that lone parents who seek to go back to work should do so when they so choose, which recognises the hon. Gentleman's point. In blunt terms, however, we do not believe that that is the best way to use those additional moneys. In my opening remarks, I told the hon. Member for Eccles that since 1988 we have spent £400 million in real terms on extra payments for families with children. We cannot afford to do that as well as have maintenance disregard. The hon. Member for Oldham, West is now on record as having dodged answering that question for the second time, so I hope that he will not mind if we impute a cost to his proposal.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: With respect to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, he is doing a grave disservice to the hon. Member for Oldham, West, who posed a number of questions. It would be churlish and rude of me not to try to answer them.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West asked about guaranteed maintenance payments, a subject that is raised in his reasoned amendment. The Department of Social Security already has an arrangement whereby the caring parent on income support can choose to have her income support paid gross if maintenance payments are uncertain or irregular, and the Department will collect the maintenance. That avoids the problems of disrupted payments and ensures that the arrangements will continue. We have given that assurance on a number of occasions and I am happy to repeat it here. Maintenance is essentially a private arrangement between two individuals and we aim to promote a service that will enable those private arrangements to be met. There is no compulsion for someone to have his or her maintenance collected through the child support agency. I hope that that reassures the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Another point touched on by hon. Members on both sides of the House related to property and is sometimes known as the so-called clean break. I shall spend a moment or two dealing with the concerns expressed. I do not believe that the fears are as real as some people have advanced, although I acknowledge that, in its interim report, the Select Committee on Social Security, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Birkenhead, put forward a quality, reasoned argument on the issue. Despite what I am about to say, I shall consider carefully the points put to us by the Select Committee.

When the courts consider what property settlements should be made, the welfare of children will come first. That is true now and will remain so in future. The formula can handle the consequences for the parties of any decision that the court consider to be in the best interests of children. If the family home goes to the caring parent and children, the absent parent's housing costs will be higher. Unless the housing costs are manifestly beyond reason, they will all go into the exempt income, which is therefore higher. In the formula, exempt income is the first charge on the available income of the absent parent who, in those circumstances, pays less maintenance.

A clearly demonstrable trade-off as regards property is built into the formula. Some three quarters of parents who leave the family home, subsequently re-establishing themselves as owner-occupiers, will be able to take advantage of that provision. We are doing nothing to prevent people leaving and re-establishing a home if a property settlement has been made through the courts—in fact, quite the reverse. The seventh example in the White Paper clearly illustrates that point.

I do not think that there can ever be a clean break between a parent and his children. It is perfectly feasible that adults may have made some form of clean-break property settlement in the past, but they have a continuing responsibility. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield rightly talked about rights and responsibilities. Parents have a continuing responsibility to look after children, whatever the circumstances. I assure hon. Members that the formula properly takes into account the property issue.

If the former marital home is transferred to the parent with care of the child, and if there is a mortgage involved and the parent is on income support, that income support can be used to take care of the financial burden. It is not always the case that such property settlements involve transfers of assets. If they involve transfers of assets invested for the purpose of providing income, the formula takes care of that in assessing the relative responsibilities for the provision of maintenance.

During our discussions hon. Members touched on the so-called regressive nature of the formula. The fact that the formula shares on a 50:50 basis the allocation of assessable income between the parent who has responsibility for maintenance and the child shows that it applies even-handedly to people on all levels of income. Once the maintenance bill has been paid, we seek to take—at a greater percentage than that shown in the White Paper—the excess of the additional assessable income. That attempts to meet the criticism put forward that the basic maintenance application is of a regressive nature. As we shall see in Committee, that is a way in which we give children access to those additional moneys.

I was asked whether the Inland Revenue should be the agency for collecting the maintenance payments. In his intense scrutiny of the detail of the Bill, it perhaps escaped the attention of the hon. Member for Oldham, West that, for example, people on income support do not pay any tax, so it would be difficult for the Inland Revenue to collect money from them.

Many questions were asked about legal aid. Advice and assistance for tribunals is currently available under the existing legal aid provisions to enable appellants to prepare for tribunal hearings. I shall write to hon. Members about the other issues that have been raised. I commend the measure to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 221.

Division No. 155] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Clelland, David
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Allen, Graham	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Alton, David	Corbett, Robin
Anderson, Donald	Corbyn, Jeremy
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cousins, Jim
Armstrong, Hilary	Crowther, Stan
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Cryer, Bob
Ashton, Joe	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Dalyell, Tam
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Barron, Kevin	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Battle, John	Dewar, Donald
Beckett, Margaret	Dixon, Don
Beith, A. J.	Dobson, Frank
Bellotti, David	Doran, Frank
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Duffy, A. E. P.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Benton, Joseph	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Bermingham, Gerald	Eadie, Alexander
Boateng, Paul	Edwards, Huw
Boyes, Roland	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Bradley, Keith	Fearn, Ronald
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Flannery, Martin
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Flynn, Paul
Buckley, George J.	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Callaghan, Jim	Foster, Derek
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Foulkes, George
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Fyfe, Maria
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Galloway, George
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Golding, Mrs Llin

Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motions in the name of Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

CHILD SUPPORT BILL *[Lords]*
[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Child Support Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Lord Chancellor under that Act; and

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums received by the Secretary of State by virtue of that Act.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

National Finance

GIFTS FOR PURPOSES OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision may be made in substitution for section 84 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it would be for the convenience of the House to discuss at the same time the other ways and means motions.

10.17 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): It might help the House if we could encourage the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who has dragged himself away from the Finance Bill Committee, to tell us what he intends to proceed with in relation to insurance companies and building societies as the reason for tabling ways and means motion No. 4. His explanation so far has been brief to the point of absence, and I hope to encourage him to tell us what he proposes.

In the Finance Bill Committee, we are already dealing with proposals in relation to building societies which are a constitutional and taxation outrage. It would be advantageous to know whether the Financial Secretary has anything similar in mind for insurance companies and friendly societies. In the case of building societies, the Government intend to secure, by retrospective legislation, a piece of blatant double taxation. If that is what they have in mind for other bodies also, we should know about it at this stage. I hope that the Minister will tell us what the ways and means motion is for.

10.18 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): That contribution from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) should not go totally unchallenged. There is clearly an issue of principle in clause 50. In 1985, the Government said that there would be no extra revenue. I doubt that similar circumstances will apply——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are not dealing with clause 50. We are dealing with the ways and means motion.

Mr. Bottomley: I am dealing with that, Mr. Speaker, if I may develop my sentence. If the paragraph changes and I go wrong, I shall rely on you to intervene.

As I was saying, I cannot believe that the Government would do the same thing twice on insurance companies or anyone else, and I believe that the Government will be thinking again about the previous experience and we shall not have any serious worries. I cannot seriously believe that £90 million could be given to the members of one building society and £250 million withheld from members of other building societies. Therefore, I hope that the House will be reassured, if not today then on some other occasion, by my hon. Friend.

10.19 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): I am confident that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) will be wholly reassured when the matters which he has raised come to be considered in detail in Committee.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) asked what the purpose of the resolution is. My

[Mr. Francis Maude]

explanation of the measures in moving them reflected the desire of the House to deal with the matters with some expedition. The resolution is to cover the new clause that we shall be introducing to change the tax rules for general annuity business and the amendment that we shall table shortly that changes the definition of a friendly society's tax exempt business. Both those proposals were announced on Budget day.

General annuity business will be taxed in broadly the same way as basic life assurance business. The investment return accruing for the benefit of annuitants and prospective annuitants will, after relief for expenses and the income element of annuities in payment, be taxed in the hands of the life office. The resolution is needed to cover that charge. We propose to remove the restrictions preventing friendly societies from issuing small taxable policies because some businesses will be classified as taxable business. The resolution is needed to cover that tax charge.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that I have the leave of the House to put motions 4 to 9 together.

Insurance companies and friendly societies

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the taxation of insurance companies and friendly societies—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Annuities

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made in connection with annuities—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Company losses

Resolved,

That provision may be made about setting off losses incurred by companies against profits or trading income of accounting periods, whenever ending—*[Mr. Kirkhope]*

Sharing of transmission facilities

Resolved,

That provision may be made about agreements relating to the sharing of transmission facilities—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Stamp duty (consideration)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the apportionment of consideration for stamp duty purposes—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Advance corporation tax: oil industry

Resolved,

That provision may be made restricting the circumstances in which advance corporation tax may be set against a company's liability to corporation tax on ring fence profits, within the meaning of Chapter V of Part XII of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Northern Ireland Committee

Ordered,

That, during the proceedings on the Matter of the Proposal for a draft Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the Northern Ireland Committee shall meet no more than three times; that the Committee have leave to meet twice on the first day on which it shall meet; and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before half-past Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two and a half hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Severn Bridges (*re-committed*) Bill

Ordered,

That the Order for the House to resolve itself into a Committee on the Severn Bridges (*re-committed*) Bill, as amended in the Select Committee, be discharged and that the Bill, as amended in the Select Committee, be re-committed to a Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

GCSE Assessment

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.21 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): The matter before the House tonight need not delay us for too long because it is one of simple justice.

Throughout society and our organisations we have the motto that justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done. Whatever the case, there is an opportunity of appeal. If a person does not like his conviction or sentence in court, he can appeal. If a person puts in a planning application and it is turned down, he can appeal. A person who is made redundant and feels that his dismissal has been unfair can go to an industrial tribunal. A person who has a social security assessment with which he disagrees can appeal. Even someone trying to enter the country can, on the rejection of a visa, appeal. Yet, in the simple case of somebody who takes a GCSE and feels that he does not have the grade that he could or should have achieved, the appeal procedure is, to say the least, ropey. The only way that such a person can appeal is if the school says so. To look at it another way, the teacher knows best. Therefore, only through the school can an appeal procedure be implemented.

We have a problem which concerns me. The amount of course work in GCSE is escalating. It accounts for an ever greater proportion of the mark. The school now acts as both judge and jury. How many schools will roll over and say, "Gosh—we got this grade wrong. We made a mistake. We will review our decision."? Very few. They will say instead, "We are right and the pupil is wrong. There is nothing that we can do. You must accept the status quo."

Today, many college and job opportunities ride on the GCSE grades that a student achieves, yet the opportunity to have a grade reassessed is denied. In the past, some marks have relied 100 per cent. on course work and I dare say that in some cases the enthusiasm and intelligence of the parents have contributed to how well the child has done. We should put in place an appeals procedure whereby a pupil or parent can have a grade reassessed if it does not seem to reflect the child's abilities. I am not suggesting that that should be done for free. An economical charge should be made. The silver thread that runs through every other aspect of our democratic life is the opportunity to evaluate whether the system has looked after us and judged fairly. Such a system should also operate in our schools.

I will support my general case with a specific example. Some months ago, a mother came to my constituency surgery to express concern that her daughter, Michelle Wakeman, had been wrongly graded in two GCSE exams —English oral and art. Michelle's case was slightly unusual in that she could not be called a team player in respect of her school activities. She had had a lot of time off because of illness and other problems. I understand that in her last year she was absent from school for between 80 and 100 days—an immense length of time. What adds piquancy to Michelle's case is that she has an IQ of 178. I understand that certain Oxford colleges and others are more than willing to consider offering her a place. Therefore, one is not dealing with someone who is struggling on the margin.

A further dimension was added to Michelle's case when the school told Mrs. Wakeman that her daughter would not be entered for the exams in French or Greek civilisation because it was questionable whether she was up to the required standard. When Mrs. Wakeman argued against that decision, she was told by the school, "We don't want to waste taxpayers' money, but if you want to pay for your daughter to take the exams, you can." So Mrs. Wakeman paid and Michelle achieved an A pass in French and a C pass in Greek civilisation. However, she achieved only a grade D pass in art and a grade 4 pass in English oral, both of which involved in-house course work.

I subsequently made representations to the local education authority and to my hon. Friend who informed me that no powers existed to deal with that.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem of subjectivity in the assessment of course work is particularly acute when the subject cannot easily be considered in terms of right and wrong, and the work cannot be marked accordingly? That applies to, for instance, economics and sociology. Teachers may have their views and may be inclined to discriminate against a pupil whose view is materially different. That makes it all the more important to introduce a built-in mechanism for appeal, so that the subjectivity of the marking system can be tested to the full.

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend has underlined my point most ably. The subject involved here is art, and not many things in life are more subjective than that.

I have pursued the matter diligently over the past few months. A report from the school stated:

> "If Michelle's English had been re-marked the work of all girls with the same grade would also have had to be re-marked as there was no final examination, just course work. There seemed no justification for this as we were pleased with our results and . . . the work of all pupils was submitted to an external moderation panel."

When I wrote to the county council, I encountered not only a similar phraseology, but the following information:

> "The school therefore had to consider the possibility that the re-assessment of Michelle's course work might be lower than the grade awarded which would in all likelihood involve a shift in grade boundaries and a down grading of other girls."

What are people playing at? Those were the responses to an innocent request for the reassessment of a girl's examination results. It is not fair on the girl. Obviously, there has been friction between her and the school. When she takes independent exams that she is supposedly not up to, she does reasonably well, gaining an A and a C, but when subjective work is assessed internally, she manages only a grade 4. As my hon. Friend the Minister will know, a grade 4 in GCSE oral English is low. I shall not say that it is on the moronic level, because that would be unfair, but it does not denote lucidity, and one would not expect it to be given to a girl who had managed to achieve a grade A in French and who is also taking Greek.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is on the Lambeth level.

Mr. Page: *Hansard* may or may not wish to record that remark.

The principle is unassailable. Course work is becoming too much a factor of GCSE, and assessments are subjective. It is, therefore, morally right for us to introduce

[Mr. Page]

a reassessment programme or policy, so that justice is not only done, but seen to be done—and we can check that it has been done.

10.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): It is one of the signatures of parliamentary democracy that any hon. Member should be able to bring to the House not just a constituency matter but an individual case that involves a local family, and individual constituents with whom he is familiar and on whose behalf he has wrestled with a Government Department.

It is a unique advantage that, in such a debate, an hon. Member should take the opportunity to press the Department concerned not just to look again at an individual case, but to weigh and evaluate the general lessons involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) is, therefore, to be congratulated not merely by me, as convention dictates, but by the whole House.

I will begin by briefly examining GCSE as a whole. Like my hon. Friend, I suspect, I wish to emphasise that GCSE is still a new examination. It introduced a unified system of examining everyone at the end of compulsory schooling, and did away with the need to specialise early—to choose between O-Level or CSE two years before taking the examination. My hon. Friend will recall that back in 1986 some teachers asked us to postpone the introduction of the exam and said that they were not ready for it. It is to the credit of Lord Joseph and his then Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, that they pressed ahead.

As I have visited schools, as an initial sceptic about the new exam, I have been left in no doubt about the commitment of teachers to it. The most recent HMI findings show that the energy and commitment of teachers in continuing to make GCSE a success, for the benefit of their pupils and students, remain undiminished. We already have evidence that GCSE results are improving year by year. In 1990, as in 1989 and 1988, the proportion achieving grades A to C improved. More importantly, last year we saw the A-level results of the first cohort to enter through GCSE. More entered for A-level, and more passed it.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: How does my hon. Friend know whether those grades reflect higher standards or a fall in the standards of exam marking?

Mr. Fallon: I was just coming to that. I was about to say that it is no discredit to GCSE—and it detracts in no way from my case that since 1986 GCSE has been generally successfully introduced—to warn the House against judging on any single first year's achievement. My hon. Friend will agree that it remains to be established how adequate this qualification is to those who want to pursue a more academic path. In that area, I find the evidence somewhat less compelling.

First, there is more and more anecdotal evidence from university departments to show that the small remaining minority from former British colonies who have continued with O-levels reach higher standards than their United Kingdom counterparts. Secondly, and more interestingly, every school that I have visited since becoming schools Minister tells me that for the more gifted pupils—those tackling more serious subjects such as the tougher sciences and the harder languages—a grade A at GCSE is no pointer and certainly no adequate preparation for study at A-level. Thirdly—this lies at the heart of the case that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West presented today—unlike any previous qualification, GCSE can be obtained by a disproportionate amount of course work.

It is significant that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, in his reply to the School Examinations and Assessment Council, has already limited the amount of course work that can count towards the final grades for A-levels. I, too, find it extraordinary that that same council now proposes a maximum of 70 per cent. course work to count towards such an important qualification. I seriously doubt whether such a high proportion of unexamined work validates the rigour that we want for the more gifted pupils.

SEAC is exactly the same body that worked so hard on the seven-year-old tests—the same group of shadowy education "experts" who, in one of the most incomprehensible and illiterate documents ever submitted to a Secretary of State, suggested the dilution of A-level standards in an attempt to remedy what they perceived to be the problem of GCSE.

If the challenge is to preserve the academic rigour of qualifications at 16 years, the answer surely does not lie in further dilution of our standards at GCSE. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West will therefore share my relief that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, in last month's White Paper, firmly rejected the advice of SEAC on A-levels and the principles that it suggested should govern. Instead, he has sent back to the council the principles that he believes should govern A-level standards.

The challenge lies with the need to police much more rigorously the standards of the GCSE, to subject the examination, where we can, to external competition, and to continue to analyse the results. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West will welcome the fact that by 1994 the grades will have been metamorphosed into levels. Level 10 should be much higher than existing grade A when the GCSE is fitted into the national curriculum.

Above all, the challenge for the Department and its advisers is to continue to take notice of precisely the sort of complaint that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West has brought before the House. First, the SEAC proposal that up to 70 per cent. of course work should count towards a supposedly academic qualification can no longer be taken seriously. Secondly, in assessment and moderation—what we used to know as marking—we should continue to be wary of any attempt to make the GCSE less rigorous than its predecessors.

As my hon. Friends will agree, an examination is effective only if those who mark do so accurately, rigorously and consistently. The marking of examination scripts in the GCSE, as in other public examinations, depends on rigorous procedures and on the experience and professionalism of examiners. In the GCSE, we have a combination of internal and external assessment. The precise balance depends on the syllabus of the course, and all markers are issued by the examining body with comprehensive instructions. They attend examiners'

meetings, which are aimed at ensuring that standards are rigorously, fairly and consistently applied. Furthermore, to safeguard standards, all the GCSE examining groups operate a process of moderation—in old language, of checking.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West is asking what a school or parent can do if, despite the extensive care that is taken by the examining groups, a mistake is made. The scope of the appeal system that is now available to GCSE candidates is a little more extensive than used to exist for their predecessors who took O-levels and CSEs. When the GCSE was introduced in 1988, there was instituted for the first time, in addition to the appeal structure of the individual examining bodies, a final court of appeal, which was operated by the joint council for the GCSE.

In 1990, a third tier—a final, final court of appeal, or a House of Lords—was added to the appeal structure in the shape of the Independent Appeals Authority for School Examinations. It was set up to deal with appeals that failed to be resolved with the framework of GCSE and A-AS examining bodies' appeal arrangements. Recent years have seen only relatively few such cases in respect of the GCSE. The joint council dealt with only six cases following the 1989 examinations, and only one last year.

There have been some instances where pupils, parents and schools have been left with a sense of injustice, which is damaging to the reputation of the GCSE and AS examinations and to public confidence in them. The new authority provides an additional assurance of fair dealing.

The remit of the independent authority goes well beyond what has previously been available. It can ask an examining body to reconsider a case and it can examine such issues as the suitability of an examination paper, the validity of a marking scheme, the quality of the marking and the way in which grade boundaries are set. The authority will publish its conclusions and the underlying reasons, and where an examining body has been asked to reconsider a case its response will similarly be published. The authority has been set up as a final arbiter. It supplements the appeals procedures of the examining groups, but as it is independent of the groups, it will provide an additional assurance of fair dealing and one hopes it will strengthen public confidence in school examinations.

Having given my hon. Friend an overview of the GCSE and the assessment procedures, I turn to the case to which he referred. He has already persistently brought it to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, in correspondence and I sympathise with the frustration felt by the candidate and her parents. I agree that in principle it would be desirable for all disputed examination results to be re-checked. However, an enormous number of candidates are disappointed with their grades, and it would not be practicable in terms of time and money for the examining bodies to re-check every case. Checking by an independent body with a separate team of examiners would involve even greater cost, all at the taxpayer's expense. I need hardly add that all the re-checking in the world does not guarantee that the candidates and all their parents would find that the grade finally awarded matched their best expectations.

Mr. Page: It is immaterial whether the grade is put up, put down or remains the same. It is the principle of being able to have it checked that I ask my hon. Friend to uphold. I will not say that the girl's grade is immaterial, but it is irrelevant to what I am asking for today.

Mr. Fallon: That could hardly have been put more clearly. That is the principle at the heart of the debate and I shall come to it.

The Government cannot instruct schools to lodge appeals on behalf of candidates. However, in the case of maintained schools, parents are entitled to pursue the matter with their local education authority. From the papers that I have seen on the case, the authority was closely involved and concluded that the school's decision not to lodge an appeal was justified.

I emphasise the importance that we attach to having the correct appeals machinery in place. I spoke earlier of the independent appeals authority, which was set up only a year ago. Its remit and method of operation may not be precisely what is required, but both will be scrutinised after the authority's first two years of operation—that is, later this year—and a report will be made to the Secretary of State.

This evening my hon. Friend has drawn the attention of the House to the fact that there is currently no way in which a pupil or his or her parents can appeal against an examination result unless the appeal has either the school's or the examination centre's support. I have explained why that is the case, but I agree that serious consideration will have to be given to the matter when the operation of the independent appeals authority is reviewed later this year. I shall certainly ensure that the criticisms of the present appeals procedure that my hon. Friend made are given consideration at that time.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 5 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Car Exports

1. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the level of exports of the British car industry in 1990 and 1989.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): Last year 414,000 cars were exported from the United Kingdom compared with 339,000 cars in the previous year. That represents an increase of 22 per cent.

Mr. Wardle: Does not the recent export success of the automotive industry point the way for other manufacturers to follow, by switching more capacity from home to export markets? Is not it likely that by the mid-1990s car assembly in the United Kingdom will be well over 2 million vehicles? Would not the greatest threat to that success story be a recurrence of inflation or, worse still, a reversion to Labour's interventionist policies?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right on all counts. In the first four months of this year exports of cars were 101 per cent. up on those of the previous year. That is certainly an example to other industries. With regard to future developments, it is marvellous news that the decline in the car industry that went on for so long under the Labour Government has now been reversed, and we expect to be net exporters by the end of the year.

Mr. Hoyle: What representations has the Secretary of State, or the Chancellor of the Exchequer had from the motor industry about the state of the home market? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that sales are down and the car industry is facing real difficulties as a result? That is all because of the Government's economic policy, especially on interest charges and the rest. When will the right hon. Gentleman press his colleagues to help the motor industry to establish itself at home as well as overseas?

Mr. Lilley: The Chancellor of the Exchequer and I met the leaders of the car industry, and naturally, they were concerned about the decline in domestic demand for cars, but I could congratulate them on their good achievement in diverting production into exports, so that production in this country has been running at record levels.

Mr. Madel: Can my right hon. Friend say whether he is satisfied that all European Community countries are playing by the same rules on what is allowed to attract overseas investment into the EC motor industry? Is he satisfied that the German Government are playing by the same rules in attracting investment in what was East Germany? Will he ask Sir Leon Brittan, as the competition Commissioner, to consider the matter?

Mr. Lilley: We keep that matter under constant review, especially with regard to the East German issue, which I shall take up, as my hon. Friend asks. It is important for us that British manufactured cars of Japanese marques are given free access throughout the Community. We are absolutely adamant that they shall have free circulation throughout the Community—*[Interruption.]*—despite the apparent resistance of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Manufacturing Industry

2. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on current levels of manufacturing output.

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the state of manufacturing industry.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The index of manufacturing output in the first quarter of 1991 was 113·4. This was 1 per cent. lower than the previous quarter, but 17 per cent. higher than the average for 1980.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister aware that 100,000 manufacturing jobs in Britain are dependent on ICI? Is he aware that 4,000 people, including many of my constituents, are directly employed by ICI, and that last year Hanson spent £34 million on research, while ICI spent £500 million? Is the Minister aware of any other European Government who would stand idly by while the fate of such a company was determined by the rules of the casino?

Mr. Sainsbury: I was aware of all the hon. Gentleman's early points, but I must differ from him on his last point, because there is no bid or anything like a bid on the table.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a matter of great concern that manufacturing output has risen by only 3 per cent. since March 1973—18 years ago? Will he confirm that in the 18 years prior to that date manufacturing output rose by about 70 per cent? How does he account for the poor performance in recent years?

Mr. Sainsbury: I cannot agree with my hon. Friend that performance has been poor in recent years. Indeed, the performance of manufacturing industry during the 1980s was outstanding compared with its rather dismal performance during the 1970s. Manufacturing output in the first quarter of this year was 17 per cent. higher than in 1980 and productivity was 56 per cent. higher. That is commendable.

Mr. Beith: Is it the Department's view, as well as that of the Prime Minister, that small manufacturing firms are getting a raw deal from the banks? If so, why is the Minister's Department not taking the initiative by

referring the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, instead of simply bringing in bank chairmen for a chat?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it would be sensible to ascertain the facts rather than seek to take action upon allegations or anecdotal evidence alone.

Mr. Cran: Is my hon. Friend aware that Britain's biggest manufacturing company, British Aerospace, is based in my constituency? In view of the tripe that we sometimes hear from the Opposition on the subject of manufacturing, will my hon. Friend explain to them why British Aerospace had a record year last year in terms of profits which amounted to £376 million, a record year in terms of turnover with new orders amounting to £10·8 billion, and why this year's order book is also at the record level of £11·8 billion?

Mr. Sainsbury: I congratulate my hon. Friend on praising the performance of a particular British firm, because all too often we hear nothing from the Labour party but the running down and denigrating of industry and complaints about its performance. Perhaps the reasons for the success of British Aerospace, to which my hon. Friend referred, are related to its increases in productivity during the 1980s, to which I referred in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox).

Mr. Gordon Brown: Does the Minister now accept that, in addition to all the other problems that British manufacturing industry faces, any possible takeover of ICI will have huge consequences because every year ICI spends 17 times as much on research and development as the Hanson Trust? Will the Minister now stop evading the question and make the Conservative party's view clear? Is it opposed to a hostile Hanson takeover of ICI?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is for once jumping to conclusions instead of rattling off statistics. Perhaps he should have regard to the Government's legal responsibilities and wait until something happens that could give rise to a reference.

Industrial Winners

3. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from British business about the Government's role in picking industrial winners.

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): The Government have received a policy document from the Confederation of British Industry, "Competing in the new Europe". That document would be important to the training and education of Opposition Members. It makes it very clear that the policies of the 1970s pursued by the Labour party, of intervention and massive investment in things that went wrong, are the last thing that this country now needs to carry on the revival of its manufacturing industry.

Mr. Shaw: Does my hon. Friend not find it incredible that people are still looking back to the 1960s and 1970s when drafting political policy documents? Does he agree that considerable research has now established that it is competition within the economy that creates winning businesses, and that a policy of picking industrial winners is like going into a sweet shop and picking sweets from large jars containing many sweets of different colours, in that one does not always get the colour that one expects? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a ludicrous policy?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely well. The Labour party lost thousands of millions of pounds when it had the chance of steering the country's industrial policy. It was a disaster, with lost jobs, lost opportunities and large amounts of lost money. British Leyland—Rover alone lost £2,750 million and there were massive losses in the steel industry. That has been reversed by privatisation and by policies based on competition and sensible Government support for business. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set that policy out well in his speeches. Opposition Members should take up their training in industry by reading them.

Mr. James Lamond: Will the Minister look a little closer to the present day—from 1979 to 1990? He will find that more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the north-west of England alone and that another 74,000 jobs will be lost this year. If he is picking winners, why does he not do something about the multi-fibre arrangement to try to protect jobs in the textile industry?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening to the argument. The Government are not trying to pick winners; that is industry's job. The Government are creating a climate and framework in which industry can flourish. Many thousands of new jobs have been created in the 1980s. Naturally, there has been industrial change because technologies, products and customer requirements change, but it is the Government's policies and not those of the Labour party, that will continue the manufacturing revival of the 1980s into the 1990s.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that ICI has proved to be an industrial winner for this country and that its future is important for its 53,000 workers and the 4,700 who work for its pharmaceutical division in my constituency? Will he assure me that all aspects of the national interest will be taken into account if a hostile bid is made for that strategically important company by Hanson plc?

Mr. Redwood: I am sure that my hon. Friend will speak eloquently, should there be any action of the kind that he describes. I assure him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, with his competition responsibilities, will consider all representations, should the need arise, and respond in the right way, given the powers of the European Community and the British Government.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister has just stated that the Government are interested in setting the climate for businesses to flourish. I am sure that he would include in that small businesses. On "The Parliament Programme" at 12 o'clock he said, "The DTI has arranged"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Paraphrase please.

Ms. Mowlam: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. The Minister said that the DTI had arranged meetings throughout the country with banks and small businesses to facilitate the discussion of problems that small businesses are facing with the current bank rate. Several small businesses that

are concerned about the difficulties have contacted me. I wanted to inform them where the meetings were being held, so I contacted DTI regional offices, but they had no record of the meetings. I contacted the Bank of England regional offices, but of those only one office organises such meetings on a day-to-day basis. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of Private Business and other voluntary organisations have no record of the meetings. Will the Minister tell us where they are to be held, because small businesses want to know?

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked the regional offices to arrange such meetings and they will take place. The hon. Lady should tell the interested companies to get in touch with DTI regional offices, which are there to serve the business community. The meetings will do just that—they will provide a forum for an exchange of views between the banks, the DTI and other interested parties.

Sir Robert McCrindle: Although it is not the Government's job to pick industrial winners—clearly that is correct—does the Minister agree that banks that are exerting undue pressure on small businesses during the current recession may be acting to their own disadvantage because among the small businesses that face difficulties today there may be the industrial winners of tomorrow? In the discussions will Ministers draw to the attention of the joint stock banks the desirability of thinking carefully before exerting the squeeze on small businesses that appears to be happening now?

Mr. Redwood: Naturally, the banks should think of their long-term business interests, but it is for individual banks to assess the risks of each case. The Government expect to see interest rates falling on average for the corporate sector as base rates fall. If special circumstances exist in some cases, there may be a risk-premium charge. My hon. Friend is also right that it would not be desirable for banks to make life so difficult for many companies that there is not a large volume of corporate business for them in future.

Reeve Burgess

4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will meet representatives of the work force of Reeve Burgess to discuss the setting up of a co-operative for the manufacture of coaches in the constituency of Bolsover.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): I have no plans at present to meet representatives of the work force of Reeve Burgess to discuss the setting up of a co-operative.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister should be ashamed of himself. Reeve Burgess is a company which manufactures buses and coaches. It is a winner, with profits of £60,000 again this April. The chances are that in May its profits will be roughly that amount. Orders are still coming in. That factory would continue, were it not for the Government's inflationary policy and asset stripping by Plaxton. If the Government can find money to bale out Rover and British Aerospace and to take those companies' troubles off their hands, they have a duty to find the money for the 180 workers at Reeve Burgess so that they can keep their 100-year-old factory going. Will the Minister pull his finger out and get something done?

Mr. Leigh: Although the closure is regretted, it is part of a rationalisation of bus manufacturing capacity by the parent company, Plaxton. Production is to be transferred to its parent plant at Scarborough. I notice that the hon. Gentleman's original question laid great stress on the need to set up a co-operative to deal with that problem. Has he forgotten the lessons of co-operatives in the 1970s? *Scottish Daily News* ate its way through £1·2 million of taxpayers' money, Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering ate its way through £4·2 million of public money, and Meriden ate its way through £15 million of public money. I hope that Opposition Front-Bench Members will take this opportunity to say that they reject the neanderthal political thinking represented by Bolsover man, which represents the concepts of the 1970s on co-operatives and Bennery in all its guises.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Dickens, but the question must be about Bolsover.

Mr. Dickens: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister has reminded the House that, under the Labour Government, millions of pounds of taxpayers' money was given to co-operatives and never repaid. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is far better to leave those matters to the private sector than to sink taxpayers' money into co-operatives?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am still waiting to hear whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) will use this opportunity to say that he rejects the failed policies of the 1970s. Those policies have failed before and will fail again.

Kuwait

7. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the follow-up of his official visit to Kuwait.

Mr. Lilley: Since my visit the known value of contracts won by British companies in Kuwait has risen from about £70 million to at least £181 million. The Kuwaiti British Fire Group has signed an agreement with the Kuwait Oil company to survey the damage to the Sabriyah oilfield. The Government have continued to support the City's proposals for the administration of compensation claims.

Mr. Dalyell: In the task of trying to put out the resource-consuming, earth-polluting, cancer-giving 700 plus oil fires in Kuwait, are not small British firms disadvantaged in relation to their American counterparts by not getting the financial guarantees that the Americans enjoy?

Mr. Lilley: Certainly not. We have done all that we can to put large companies in touch with small companies with innovative ideas, and to put those ideas directly to the Kuwaiti authorities. The Americans are jealous of our actions to ensure that British companies have a lead in getting business in Kuwait, and there have been complaints in the American press that the American Government have not been as helpful as we have in this

matter. We have received many thanks and much support from British industry for the upfront way in which we have approached the issue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, because of the unique experience gained in the North sea, British companies are in a strong position to exploit the opportunities that exist today in Kuwait? Will he also confirm that the British are held in high regard in Kuwait and it is the combination of those two factors that are making the Americans envious?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is good news that the Kuwaiti British Fire Group, which I think includes Scottish interests as well as those from the rest of the United Kingdom, has won the contract, which could lead to extensive work in Kuwait. I pay tribute to it for its efforts on that front.

Machine Tools Technologies Association

8. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Machine Tools Technologies Association to discuss the recession in industry.

12. **Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Machine Tools Technologies Association to discuss the recession in industry.

Mr. Redwood: My noble Friend the industry Minister has recently invited the Machine Tools Technologies Association to a meeting. I hope that it will take up that offer. I am sure that there is much to talk about.

Mr. Buckley: When the Minister meets the MTTA, will he take into account its 1991 spring report in which it expresses fears about the Government's tough, monetary policy, which has thrown an unnecessary burden onto the manufacture of machine tools? That will have an effect on the future upturn that may take place in British industry. Will that mean that the British machine tools industry will be incapable of meeting the demand? Will the Secretary of State take into account the number of changes in the Department of Trade and Industry which mean that manufacturing industry has no great influence on or interest in the Government's attitude?

Mr. Redwood: The Government are most interested in the future performance of manufacturing industry and give it every sensible support to achieve good performance. I have the report to which, I think, the hon. Gentleman referred. I am pleased to see that it says that in 1990 exports reached 50 per cent. of total production, which shows how much more competitive the industry is now than it was some years ago. It goes on to say that British machine tool technology leads the world in many important sectors and lists a series of important spares in which it does so. The Government welcome that and will give the industry support. The Minister for Trade met the industry's association at the end of last year to encourage the industry to export more. That is the sort of support that we shall continue to give the industry.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Is the Minister aware of the other report of the Machine Tools Technologies Association on industrial trends, which shows that we are investing less in manufacturing and machine tools than we were in 1979, that the manufacturing base is being eroded and that orders for that industry are decreasing faster than at any time since the second world war? At its meeting with the Government, the industry's association will want to know what positive steps the Government will take to help the industry. Will the Minister tell the House now?

Mr. Redwood: As I have already mentioned, the Government are keen to help the industry with the promotion of exports, which is its biggest sales sector and is, I believe, extremely competitive. The value of industrial advice from a former chief executive of Meriden is not so sure. Naturally, the MTTA will discuss a wide range of issues with my noble Friend the Minister for Industry, who will do whatever he can within our policies to provide the necessary assistance. We are not returning to backing winners because that would mean backing the wrong ones and, losing a lot of money for the taxpayer, which would make the economy worse, not better.

Mr. Burt: Bearing in mind that today there are more jobs in manufacturing in Britain than in France and Italy, does my hon. Friend agree that talk of our manufacturing industry's decline and death is premature? Will he and other Ministers in the Department do their best to ensure, both by rhetoric and conduct, that people who work in manufacturing industry believe that they and their companies are as important to the Government as anyone who works in the City?

Mr. Redwood: I agree. I, too, was proud to work in manufacturing industry for a period and I know what an important contribution it makes to our wealth generation. My hon. Friend is right to say that there are many manufacturing success stories of which we should be proud. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State talked about the revival of the motor industry in answer to an earlier question. The machine tools industry is doing great things in changing its design, pattern of sales and products. That is true of many other manufacturing industries, and we intend to create the conditions in which that revival can take place.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend accept that we are all impressed by trade associations and their abilities—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to stop this bantering across the Chamber.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend consider—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It does not matter to me, Mr. Speaker, if the Opposition act like idiots—so it should not worry you.

These trade associations are important in respect of exports, but does my hon. Friend agree that if they are to prosper abroad it would have been more encouraging for British industry if the new Moscow trade centre had been built by a British firm, not a French one? Does he think that the French or the Germans would have allowed their trade centres in Moscow to be built by the British? I think not. That is one of the reasons why they are more successful than we are: they support their people while we sometimes throw ours to the wolves.

Mr. Redwood: It is also necessary to submit the lowest bid to win competitions. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade would have been delighted if the lower bid had come from a British company and I will ensure that he writes to my hon. Friend about any other matters that may be relevant in this case.

Mr. Henderson: The machine tool industry will be pleased to know that the Minister has read its recent report, but has he read yesterday's announcement that new orders in that industry are down 46 per cent. in the first quarter of this year compared with last year? Does he accept that the machine tool industry is an accurate barometer of what is happening in the rest of the economy? If so, does he agree that this is yet more damning evidence of the industrial damage being done to this country?

Mr. Redwood: Manufacturing investment was very high in the 1980s, particularly in the latter years of that decade. Of course the hon. Gentleman is right: there was some decline in orders at the beginning of this year, for domestic purposes, because the economy is weak at the moment, as he well knows. That is why I stress the importance of export markets accounting now for more than half the sales of the industry. We can give considerable support for that effort, and as the recovery gets under way in the United Kingdom domestic orders will of course increase.

Post Office

9. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to lift the Post Office letter monopoly.

Mr. Leigh: The Post Office's letter monopoly is a privilege, not a right. While we keep the options under review, we have no present plans to alter the scope of the letter monopoly, although in the event of a cessation or serious disruption to the letter service we would consider suspending it. The Government remain fully committed to the existence of a nationwide letter service with an affordable, uniform tariff structure, available to everyone, including those in rural areas.

Mr. Brown: When my hon. Friend gets back to his office at the DTI will he open his top drawer in which, when serving as a PPS to his predecessor, I recall leaving a copy of a document published by the No Turning Back group, entitled "Choice and Responsibility"? It was co-authored by my hon. Friend and myself and by a large number of our other colleagues last July. I commend to my hon. Friend the words on page 14, where we wrote:

"The Post Office monopoly can no longer be justified."

Mr. Leigh: As we have an entirely open mind on this matter I can announce today that I am happy to read any pamphlets on this issue, even those written by myself. More than that it might be unwise to say. My hon. Friend might conclude—I would not, but he might—that it is a misfortune of political life that a Back Bencher can say exactly what he wants although people do not always listen to him, while people always listen to a Minister, so he cannot say exactly what he wants to.

I have a book on my desk in the DTI to which I occasionally refer when I am given an idle moment. It was written in the 14th century and entitled "The Cloud of Unknowing"—that represents the reactionary fog in which the Opposition move. They are not prepared to look at anything or to reform anything. What is, has to be, for now and for ever more. I am the Minister responsible for consumer affairs, and I am prepared to consider competition and value for consumers with an open mind.

Mr. Hain: I welcome the Minister's statement that he intends to retain the letter monopoly and I remind some of his hon. Friends who are keen to lift it that if they did so, cream-skimming would result and private operators would be willing to deliver only profitable inter-city routes. Conservative Members who advocate lifting the monopoly would find that services in rural areas would cause tariffs to rise to 80p a letter. The letter services to rural areas would be desperately hit and many Members thus affected would lose their seats as a result.

Mr. Leigh: I fear that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my original answer, in which I said that the Government are absolutely committed to a uniform tariff structure, even in rural areas. We are also committed to choice and value for money in the Post Office, but we do not rule out that in certain circumstances competition may well increase choice and be to the benefit of the consumer.

Mr. Harris: Despite the veiled attack by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), will the Minister accept the congratulations of most hon. Members from rural areas on getting the balance absolutely right on this difficult issue and for stressing the importance of a uniform tariff for the mail? By not ruling out the possibility of competition my hon. Friend has struck exactly the right balance.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend has also got it absolutely right.

Furniture Safety

10. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made recently to the Economic Community regarding regulations on the safety of furniture.

Mr. Leigh: I visited Mr. Van Miert, the Commissioner responsible for consumer protection, on 17 May. We discussed matters arising from differences between the regulation of fire safety of furniture in the United Kingdom and the Commission's proposals for a directive on the fire behaviour of upholstered furniture. My Department has just received confirmation of a decision taken by the Commission not to proceed with the proposed directive on the fire behaviour of upholstered furniture pending research into the feasibility of suitable test methods.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to the Minister for his answer and for the information that the directive has been postponed. In view of continuing research, will he ensure that when the directive comes back for consideration, United Kingdom law on the safety of furniture is not weakened by the acceptance of lower standards? Will he especially ensure that the regulations contain a water-soak test on the permanence of chemical finishes to upholstery materials? Will he also ensure that ignition resistance and fire spread levels are equal to those set out in United Kingdom legislation?

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. There was absolute cross-party agreement on this issue. We were determined firmly to take up this matter with the Commission. We said that we had the strongest standards in Europe and that we had imposed them with cross-party support and would not accept any directive which lowered them. It is a victory for both sides of the House and for the fire service and the industry involved that the directive has been postponed. We shall make it clear to the Commission in the two or three years grace that when the directive is reintroduced it must be based on our excellent standards.

Mr. Conway: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the British furniture industry for its co-operation in the implementation of the regulations, especially with regard to clear labelling which, of course, enables consumers to see exactly what they are buying? As Britain and Ireland are the only two member states to have such regulations, will my hon. Friend assure consumers and the House that we shall continue to press to make sure that such regulations apply throughout the European Community?

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Plainly, when we receive the directive we must ensure that it is based on our standards. It is vital for the industry and for consumer safety that there is no question of any dangerous foam-filled furniture being imported. Our trading standard officers can stop such furniture coming in and there is no question of a legal challenge to our very high standards.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that his failure to champion and secure tougher measures on foam safety means that many furniture manufacturing jobs and companies are at risk and that hundreds of thousands of foam-filled items of furniture can be imported? The matter can be challenged in the European Court and we should have had a settlement by now. Why have we not secured an effective and tough directive?

Mr. Leigh: Not for the first time the hon. Gentleman, who shadows me, appears to have devised his question before he heard my answer. I have made it clear that the Commission has withdrawn its directive. We cannot force the Commission to impose a directive now on our European competitors based on our high standards. All we can do is what we have achieved. We have prevented the Commission from introducing a directive which would have lowered those standards. Therefore, I repeat that the Commission's decision to withdraw the directive is a victory for both sides of the House. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has sought to make a party-political point out of the matter.

Mrs. Peacock: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on the furniture industry, but will he confirm to the House that in that industry he includes those in Britain who manufacture beds? Will he ensure that their high standards are maintained and not watered down by Europe? Will he also ensure that any goods that are not up to those high standards are rejected at our ports?

Mr. Leigh: The directive concerned our regulations on foam-filled furniture and in that respect my hon. Friend is right.

European Commission (Industrial Policy)

11. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of the European Commission to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: I met representatives of the Commission at the ministerial meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris yesterday and we discussed various issues related to trade and industry.

Mr. Cummings: Has the Minister recently considered the vast differences between the aid given to respective countries within the EC for research and development? Is it not rather foolish for us to be out of step with our competitors? Does he agree with the Prime Minister's constituent, Mr. Bill Abbotts, whose machine tool company is having real problems because of the Government's economic policies, that there really is nothing wrong with the country, only with its daft policies?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. In Britain, a higher proportion of research and development is financed by the Government than in most other countries and our research and development on civil matters financed by the Government is a slightly higher proportion of GDP than that financed by the Japanese Government. But the most successful research and development is often that carried out by private companies in a competitive environment because it is competition which stimulates innovation and growth and it is on that that we most rely. It is significant that during the last decade, when we returned to a competitive environment, for the first time for more than a century in peace time the British economy grew faster than that of France and Germany.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the CBI's new report "Competing in the New Europe" endorses the Government's policies on inflation, industrial relations and competition?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Not only that, but it condemns the Opposition's policies. It says that they are not wanted by industry, and it is right. When I go round the country, the Labour party is condemned because it has no strategy for defeating inflation. The country does not want to return to intervention, subsidies, controls and penal taxation with the trade unions back in the driving seat.

Ms. Quin: Would the Secretary of State care to explain to his European counterparts some of the crazy industrial policy decisions that the Government have taken? For example, can he defend the scandal of the closure of the Sunderland shipyards recently highlighted by "Panorama", the failure to support shipbuilding orders at Appledore shipbuilders in Devon or the failure to allow bidders for Ravenscraig to put forward their proposals? Is it not the case that far from the Opposition running down industry, it is the Government who are intent on closing facilities and turning away orders?

Mr. Lilley: That is absolute nonsense. Most of the policies to which the hon. Lady refers had a European dimension and we were acting within the constraints imposed by the European Commission and European law. I know that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) finds that distasteful, but none the less it is a fact. What I do find, and what I found yesterday at the OECD, is

complete amazement that there still exists one country in Europe with a party which still believes in socialism, and it is not east of the iron curtain, it is there on the Opposition Benches.

Potash

13. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much potash by weight or value, at 1990 prices, was imported and exported by this country in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom has had a deficit in trade in potash in each of the last 10 years, but the clear trend has been for a reduction in that deficit over the decade. I will arrange for the full information requested to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Would not that deficit be made much worse if the only potash mine in Britain, which is in my constituency, were to be closed? Is it not the Government's responsibility to ensure that jobs are maintained by seeking to keep open prosperous businesses? Have not the chances of that mine being kept open been severely weakened by the Secretary of State's crass decision not to allow the Kemira deal with ICI which would have enhanced the job prospects of my constituents and kept open the only potash mine in Britain?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I am sure my hon. Friend knows, no Secretary of State has overruled the recommendation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. My hon. Friend has described the company as successful; I congratulate it on its success, and, indeed, on its export achievements. The most effective way of keeping companies going are not Government intervention, subsidies and handouts, but efficient production by efficient companies and successful exporting.

Mr. Graham: Do the Minister and the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) realise on what the import of potash, and the success of that company, depend? In my constituency, many people work for Kvaerner Kincaed which produces marine ship engines. The company importing potash cannot have an engine built by any other British company, because Kvaerner Kincaed is the last company in Britain that produces such engines. Why are the Government standing idly by while my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is in Europe fighting his corner to keep the marine engine industry alive?

Mr. Sainsbury: I must congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the ingenuity with which he has linked the subject of marine engines with that of potash. I am happy to say that, because of the success of the company in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), marine engines often carry British exports of potash abroad, as well as bringing potash imports into this country.

The following is the information:

United Kingdom trade in "potash" (ie potassium salts) is predominantly in potassium chloride. Trade in this product is shown in table 1. Trade in other potassium salts is shown in table 2.

Values at constant prices are not available. Current price figures have been given in their place.

Table 1
United Kingdom trade in potassium chloride, 1981-1990[1]

	'000 tonnes			£'000s		
	Volume exports	*Imports*	*Balance*	*Value exports*	*Imports*	*Balance*
1981	91·2	467·0	−375·8	4,671	28,624	−23,953
1982	76·6	481·5	−404·9	4,733	27,925	−23,192
1983	145·7	472·5	−326·8	9,288	30,146	−20,858
1984	96·6	509·2	−412·6	6,522	34,767	−28,245
1985	78·5	574·5	−496·0	6,371	41,464	−35,093
1986	94·9	470·9	−376·0	7,293	34,718	−27,425
1987	327·4	521·2	−193·8	22,799	34,064	−11,265
1988	434·6	570·6	−136·0	29,595	38,150	−8,555
1989	367·1	452·6	−85·5	26,695	33,498	−6,803
1990	384·5	[3]—	[3]—	28,266	[3]—	[3]—

Table 2
United Kingdom trade in potassium salts, 1981-1990[2]

	'000 tonnes			£'000s		
	Volume exports	*Imports*	*Balance*	*Value exports*	*Imports*	*Balance*
1981	2·1	55·6	−53·5	686	6,010	−5,324
1982	2·4	58·8	−56·4	1,158	7,482	−6,324
1983	[3]—	60·4	[3]—	[3]—	8,372	[3]—
1984	[3]—	74·0	[3]—	[3]—	9,495	[3]—
1985	[3]—	64·6	[3]—	[3]—	10,463	[3]—
1986	[3]—	67·0	[3]—	[3]—	11,072	[3]—
1987	6·9	63·2	−56·3	2,323	11,823	−9,500
1988	7·5	84·2	−76·7	3,609	14,147	−10,538
1989	6·2	68·7	−62·5	3,505	15,206	−11,701
1990	8·2	102·1	−93·9	4,051	17,964	−13,913

[1] Covers section 562·31 of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).
[2] Covers sections 272·4, 522·64, 523·52, 523·74, 562·32 and 562·39 of the SITC.
[3] Denotes that the figures are not available, since publication could be disclosive of commercially sensitive information.
Source: British Geological Survey.

Imports

14. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to reduce import penetration.

Mr. Lilley: The Department's policies aim to foster the competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is not that a very complacent answer? There has been a 10 per cent. increase in import penetration since 1979, and currently 50 per cent. of cars, 80 per cent. of videos and 90 per cent. of office equipment are imported. Is the Secretary of State aware that National Power and PowerGen are contemplating importing another 30 million tonnes of coal, which will add £170 million to our balance of payments deficit? Has he no plans to control those imports?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to control imports, he must first persuade his party to propose that we leave the EC, as the matter is entirely within EC competence.

It so happens that import penetration in the United Kingdom as a proportion of gross domestic product is almost exactly the same as that in Germany, which is not generally held to be an uncompetitive country. I am glad to say that our exports have risen in volume terms by some 60 per cent. over the past decade, which is proof that British industry is competing abroad with increasing success. That is a result of our policy of encouraging competition.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we really believe in free trade, we should not be unduly worried about import penetration, but should do everything possible to encourage our exports? Is he really satisfied that we have an open market in Japan in all respects?

Mr. Lilley: I am never satisfied. Every time that I meet the Japanese industry Minister, as I did yesterday, I encourage him to open his market further to British goods. Over the past three years, when we have made our campaign to encourage the exporting of goods to Japan a priority, exports have nearly doubled. We are now launching a new campaign, with the support of the Japanese Government, to open up opportunities for British industry on an expanding scale. I am delighted that industry is responding to those opportunities.

Mr. Turner: Will the Secretary of State accept that import penetration is not helped by the obsessive mergers and takeovers with which we are so beset? A company in my constituency, S. Edge and Co., has traded successfully for many years. It has an excellent work force and an excellent product, but, as a result of a takeover, it is having to call in the receiver. What will the Secretary of State do about those 350 jobs?

Mr. Lilley: If a merger or takeover reduces competition, we can take action to prevent that under our mergers and competition policy. However, it would be wrong to protect every company from the prospect of managerial change or increased competition as a result of takeover.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that almost all the Labour party's policies would make British firms less competitive in this market and, therefore, make import penetration even worse? Will he continue to warn the British public about that danger?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is no coincidence that the only period since the war, in a complete economic cycle, when there has been virtually no growth in productivity outside the oil industry and in non-oil GDP was during the previous Labour Government. That should be contrasted with the success of the 1980s when for the first time in a peacetime decade for a century, Britain outstripped France and Germany.

Single European Market

15. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the preparedness of British industry for the completion of the single European market.

Mr. Sainsbury: British industry is well informed about the single European market. Many firms are taking positive steps to meet the opportunities and challenges that it is bringing.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Minister admit that his Department is no thoroughbred when it comes to informing British companies about the single market? A recent survey showed that only 8 per cent. of those companies have any idea of what will happen to them when the starting stalls are opened. Is that not another reason why the Tories should be sent off to the knackers yard?

Mr. Sainsbury: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on including an appropriate series of analogies such as thoroughbreds on this day. I do not know whether he is aware of what will happen shortly after 3.45 pm. I am happy to say that our surveys show that there is 98 per cent. awareness in British industry of the single market as a result of our highly successful and appreciated advertising campaign. Over 50 per cent. of firms have said that they have taken, are taking or intend to take action to meet the changes brought about by the single market.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: What advice are the Government giving to the Japanese-owned British car manufacturers as to how they can take advantage of the single market, bearing in mind that, as the Minister knows, discussions are taking place now about the fact that the production of the Japanese-owned firms will be included within a collective EEC import quota? Does he appreciate that, instead of encouraging free trade, it will discourage any Japanese industrialists from investing in Britain?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to say that one Japanese company—Nissan—is exporting over 80 per cent. of its production. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, we have made it clear that there is no doubt that Japanese-marked cars produced in Britain should be freely traded in the Community in the same way as cars produced by United States-owned firms.

Dr. Moonie: Given the critical importance of British Steel to British manufacturing industry's competitive position, why are the Government steadfastedly refusing to allow the House to debate the issue? Does the Minister accept that the Government hold a special share in British Steel and guarantees from that company? Given that

Ravenscraig is profitable and that there were other potential bidders for that part of British Steel, will the Minister call in that company and ask the Office of Fair Trading to investigate the position?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am somewhat surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks that a debate on the steel industry is so urgent when it is not a subject chosen for debate this very day by Her Majesty's Opposition. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that it is important that British industry should have available competitive and efficient supplies of steel. I feel that I hardly need remind the hon. Gentleman of how much more competitive and efficient the British steel industry has become since privatisation.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does not my hon. Friend consider discriminatory and extremely dangerous the proposals made by the European Commission to count cars with a high European content made in Britain in Japanese-owned factories as Japanese and therefore not to allow them to be sold freely in Europe? Is not it the case that European and especially British consumers have been ripped off for far too long by import barriers which have been lobbied for by inefficient, subsidised and protected European manufacturers such as Fiat and Renault? Is not it about time that such companies put their own houses in order rather than expecting the British consumer to foot the bill for them?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise from what I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have said that there is no possibility of what he suggested about Japanese-marked cars made in Britain happening. We cannot anticipate what the European Commission will finally propose in that regard, but I repeat what I said earlier—as far as we are concerned, Japanese-marked cars made in Britain must be allowed to trade freely throughout the Community.

Recession

16. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the recession in industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a wide range of business matters. I next expect to meet representatives of the CBI on 14 June 1991.

Mr. Mitchell: I bet that the CBI is looking forward to an empty ministerial car drawing up outside its offices and the entire DTI team getting out. When the Secretary of State meets the CBI, will he tell it that 3,200 jobs have been lost every working day since the Prime Minister took office, that 4,000 jobs a week have been lost in manufacturing and that 40,000 viable companies are predicted to go bust this year? Will he also tell the CBI that the Chancellor's prophecy that recovery was just around the corner was last used by President Hoover in the United States in 1930 and that there can be no recovery until the Chancellor gets interest rates down substantially in order to jolt manufacturing out of the spiral of decline?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is clearly brushing up his green credentials by recycling old jokes. I acknowledge that there is concern about the depth of the recession, but I know that industry believes that our first priority must be to get inflation down. In its meetings with me, the CBI has made it clear that it supports the priority that we give to that objective and that it has no intention of urging us to withdraw from the exchange rate mechanism. It is also confident that, as industry recovers from the recession we shall see a renewed, strong growth during the 1990s such as that which it praised us for achieving during the 1980s.

Mr. Forman: When my right hon. Friend meets representatives of the CBI, will he take the opportunity to remind its members of the Government's positive record in creating the framework for inward investment? Will he draw to their attention especially our success in securing about three fifths of American inward investment in the Community and about two fifths of Japanese investment in recent years? Will he also draw to their attention the contribution that that can make to pulling us out of the recession?

Mr. Lilley: I shall certainly do that. This country's success in attracting inward investment from all over the world demonstrates that we have created the most attractive environment anywhere in Europe for industry, especially manufacturing industry. That is why the most recent figures produced by the Japanese show that about half of all Japanese investment in Europe comes to this country and that we attract more Japanese investment than the whole of Asia.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given today's latest figures which show that there has been a 97 per cent. rise in small business failures in the south and a 115 per cent. rise in business failures in the midlands, and given the latest forecast that up to 1,000 businesses every week could go under, will the Secretary of State, in addition to any talks that he will have with the banks, now speak up for the needs of the businesses of Britain? Will he urge the banks to bring down interest rates of 16, 17 and 18 per cent. as a matter of immediacy, or is he abandoning the small businesses of Britain just as quickly as the Government have abandoned the unemployed?

Mr. Lilley: I shall certainly ask the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate any anti-competitive practices in which I have received evidence that the banks are indulging, whether the evidence results from the inquiries of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer or otherwise. I have received no evidence and no evidence has been submitted by the hon. Gentleman to me or to the Director General. *[Interruption.]* There have been allegations, but first we must establish the facts. That is what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Bank of England are doing. Only in the light of facts can decisions be taken.

I am aware of the deep anxiety among small businesses about various practices of which they accuse the banks. That is why I asked my regional offices to initiate a series of meetings—the first of which took place three weeks ago in the west midlands—between banks and businesses at which businesses could put directly to the banks the changes that they wish to see.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree, first, that one feature of the British economy is its slowness to respond to a stimulus and, secondly, that confidence is a major factor in pulling the economy out of recession? Therefore, does not he think it prudent that we reduce interest rates as soon as that can conceivably be achieved?

Mr. Lilley: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend on that. I accept the point that he makes. However, he will agree that the anxiety expressed by the Labour party about the level of interest rates is full of crocodile tears because it has declared that its policy would be to increase Government borrowing, which would drive up interest rates, increase inflation and give greater pain to small businesses than anything that they have suffered in the past.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any notification from the Foreign Secretary that he intends to make a statement about the position of British citizens in Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia? I was contacted this morning by Mr. Paul Anderson and Mr. Nigel Comely, who work for a firm in my constituency. They told me that the situation in the capital is extremely dangerous. They and about six other British people have been trying to leave the capital, but there are no aeroplanes to take them out. They have suggested to the British embassy that they be taken to Kenya or a nearby country from which they could make their way to London.

Do you, Mr. Speaker, know whether a statement is to be made? As the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is on the Government Front Bench, could he tell the House what the position is and reassure us that those citizens are being given all the help that is possible?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but it is an important matter and what has been said will have been heard by the Minister.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance about whether in the debate that we are to have on London it will be in order to highlight the fact that the education policies of Lambeth have so affected education that the official Labour party spokesman is transferring his child to a Conservative— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have seldom heard a more spurious point of order than that. If the hon. Member seeks to participate in the debate and succeeds, he can make that point. However, it is not a point of order for me to deal with now.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the Floor of the House yesterday, I raised a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can anticipate the hon. Gentleman. I have written to him on the matter, and I think that he will have received my letter.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. Member read my letter to him?

Mr. Cryer: I have done so, Mr. Speaker. I accept that when I raised the point of order about members and the chairman of Lloyd's seeking to influence legislation in this place, the matter was hypothetical. I must draw your attention to the list of amendments which have been tabled to the Finance Bill. New clause 24 specifically provides for "carry-back of underwriters' trading losses", which would directly apply to Lloyd's members. Therefore, the matter is not hypothetical, especially bearing in mind——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me now. It will be debated in Standing Committee. It is for the Chairman of the Committee, first, to decide whether to select the amendment and, secondly, to make a decision on the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I cannot foreshadow what the Chairman is likely to say about that matter. Nor have I seen the new clause.

Mr. Cryer: Am I correct in assuming, therefore, that new clause 24, which is not listed as a clause to be dealt with by the Standing Committee—indeed, it is exempted from the list to be dealt with by the Committee—will be dealt with on the Floor of the House? If the clause is debated in the House after the Bill has been reported, are you prepared, Mr. Speaker, to make a statement on the financial influence of Lloyd's?

Mr. Speaker: If that matter were to arise on Report when I was in the Chair, that would be a different matter. However, I cannot foreshadow what the Chairman of Ways and Means may decide if it is to be taken in Committee on the Floor of the House, or what may be decided by the Chairman of the Standing Committee upstairs.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I dealt with the hon. Member's point of order.

Mr. Nicholls: But I could not hear your ruling, Mr. Speaker, because of the noise being made by Labour Members.

Mr. Speaker: My ruling was that it was a spurious point of order.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise a matter with you, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as the guardian of the accuracy of the *Official Report*. In a debate on 1 December 1987 on the Education Reform Bill, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said:

> "Instead, it is to the Secretary of State's eternal shame that he has brought forth a Bill that will divide; that will set child against child, class against class, parent against parent, school against school, race against race."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 783.]

The hon. Gentleman added that that would "lead to educational apartheid." In the light of this morning's news concerning the hon. Member for Blackburn, of which we have just heard, will you, Mr. Speaker, investigate whether that is a true and fair record?

Mr. Speaker: That point of order seems to me equally spurious.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Opposition Members frequently raise points of order on the ground that Conservative Members predominantly should not speak on certain issues because they have an interest in them. Are you not fed up to the back teeth with that hypocrisy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hypocrisy is not a word that we use in this Chamber. What is the hon. Member's point of order? I frequently get fed up, and I shall be fed up in a minute.

Mr. Howarth: I was making the point that double standards were being applied. On no occasion have Labour Members sought your ruling, Mr. Speaker, on whether they should speak on matters to do with trade union reform, when they are paid by the trade unions.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows the rule. On matters of public policy, it is always legitimate for Members to vote. When private interests are involved, that is a different matter.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice in respect of a sub judice matter. On the Order Paper for this afternoon is a motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition concerning the government of London. Police inquiries are now taking place within the housing department of the Labour-controlled London borough of Hackney. Will it be in order during today's debate for any right hon. or hon. Member to refer to the alleged corruption that has taken place in the London borough of Hackney's housing department? May we, or may we not, speak on that matter?

Mr. Speaker: As far as I am aware, no criminal charges have been brought, so it would be legitimate to raise the matter in the House.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 21 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. Roger Knapman.
Mr. Eric Illsley.
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Education (Swimming and Water Safety) (No. 2)

3.40 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Education Reform Act 1988 in order to make special provision for the teaching of swimming in maintained schools; and for connected purposes.

I am sure that the many hon. Members who are keen swimmers will need no convincing of its value as a recreational activity. It is of more benefit to a person's overall fitness than any other sport. It exercises the whole body and can be paced to individual requirements and development. It is particularly suited to children and adults with special needs, such as those with asthma and spina bifida, to choose but two examples.

Swimming is a health-promoting exercise that is virtually free from injury. It is the only activity that scores maximum points on the key criteria set out by the Health Education Authority for providing stamina, suppleness and strength. What really marks swimming from other sports, however, is that the ability to swim, and the knowledge and possession of water safety skills, is a critical factor in reducing the risk of drowning.

Research by the Royal Life Saving Society and the Amateur Swimming Association shows that, throughout all age groups, the risk of drowning is more significant for non-swimmers and that among the 10-to-24 age group non-swimmers are three and a half times more at risk than swimmers. In the past three years, almost 200 children under 15 have died by drowning, 80 per cent. of whom could not swim.

With the growth in water-related sports such as canoeing, water skiing and sub-aqua, it is more important than ever that every child learns to swim. In spite of that, many schools and local authorities do not have a requirement to provide swimming lessons, and the level of provision is declining.

The three national governing bodies of swimming—the Royal Life Saving Society, the Amateur Swimming Association and the English Schools Swimming Association—became so concerned about that trend that they formed a Swim for Life campaign, with the aim of securing the teaching of swimming by all schools. In 1988, the campaign surveyed local authorities and found that more than half had no clear policy on the teaching of swimming, while more than 80 per cent. could not meet the basic standards for the provision of swimming lessons. A more recent survey by the Secondary Heads Association confirms the trend and shows a further reduction, with fewer than half of 11 to 15-year-olds having any curricular swimming.

The inequality of swimming provision cannot simply be ascribed to resources or to the political complexion of a council. High and low-spending councils have been cutting swimming lessons. Unfortunately, because it is not statutory and can be cut without going into legal obligations, swimming is perceived by many local authorities as a marginal area.

The unacceptable and declining level of swimming provision is highlighted by comparison with other European countries. The French have a programme of building hundreds of pools and have introduced comprehensive swimming instruction, which is already

showing dividends in improved standards. In west Germany, every child leaving school can swim. In the Netherlands, swimming lessons are given to children aged seven or over, and there are standard tests to determine their ability. It is reasonable to aim for all British children to achieve at least minimal swimming standards by the time that they leave primary school.

With physical education on the national curriculum as a foundation subject, we have the means to ensure that every child receives proper tuition in swimming and water safety—not just those whose education authorities are more enlightened. The working group set up to advise on the form that PE should take in the national curriculum published an interim report in February, which concluded that

"swimming is too important to leave to chance and should be an entitlement under the national curriculum".

It went on to make the strong recommendation that all children should be able to swim and possess water safety skills by the age of 11.

However, the Government are concerned about resources and have firmly told the working group to make recommendations which can be

"realistically related to the general level of funding which can reasonably be expected to be made available."

At a recent conference organised by the Swim for Life campaign, the Minister for Sport clarified the Government's position:

"There is no doubt that the ability to swim saves lives and provision of swimming tuition can be justified on this ground alone."

That is welcome; but my hon. Friend went on to say:

"We simply cannot impose a duty on schools which they are unable to deliver".

That is a reasonable point, and clearly we need to consider the practical implications of a fixed educational requirement that every child should be taught to swim.

The Swim for Life campaign discussed that issue at its conference. A facilities consultant to the Amateur Swimming Association estimated that, with proper targeting of existing facilities and resources, it would cost £4·8 million to teach every 10-year-old to swim. That approach is sensible, as it recognises that resources must be allocated more evenly if there is to be a swimming requirement.

Clearly it is wrong that some children receive extensive swimming tuition and recreational swimming while others receive nothing at all. If £4·8 million is all that stands in the way of the right of every youngster to learn to swim, that seems a small price to pay when measured against the cost of hundreds of children's lives. It is a small part of the multi-billion pound budget of the Department of Education and Science.

The ASA assessment highlighted the cost of not teaching children to swim. Every child who learns to swim then visits public pools, which gain revenue from the visit. Conversely, pools will lose revenue if swimming lessons continue to decline. It was estimated that, if every 10-year-old were taught to swim, that trend would suggest a potential gain of about £138·5 million—far in excess of the cost of the lessons.

My purpose in introducing a Bill to require all schoolchildren to be taught swimming and water safety is to promote the implementation of the working group's recommendation and to ensure that the Government's concern about resources can be met. My Bill is similar to the one being ably steered through another place, with strong cross-party support, by my noble Friend Lord Norrie. It would require maintained schools to teach swimming so as to ensure that all their pupils could swim and had an understanding of water safety. The Secretary of State would be required to set attainment targets and programmes of study under the national curriculum. That goes beyond the existing requirements of the Education Reform Act, which leaves it to the Secretary of State's discretion whether swimming and water safety should be specified as part of PE under the curriculum.

I fully appreciate the Government's concern that finding the resources to implement the Bill could be a problem. The position is made worse by the fact that there is so little information about existing facilities. That is why my Bill would require the Secretary of State to conduct a survey of swimming facilities available to schools, and would give him the power, for a transitional period of five years, to exempt schools from the requirement if he were satisfied, on the evidence of the survey, that lack of swimming facilities would place an "unreasonable burden" on them. That means that rural schools, where pupils cannot easily reach pools, may be exempted. However, the Bill specifically states that every child must still be taught the principles of water safety and that such schools may be exempted only for the transitional period of five years.

The life-saving features of swimming also make it essential that children should be taught to swim to minimum standards. My Bill would require the Secretary of State to prescribe targets. The national curriculum working group has already recognised that by recommending that pupils should be able to swim a minimum distance of 25 m, possess water safety skills and have a sound knowledge of water——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Lady coming to the end of her speech? She has had her 10 minutes, but she may complete her sentence.

Mrs. Winterton: Thank you for the warning, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, this is a small Bill that will have a big impact if passed. It would be enormously popular throughout the country and is supported by both parents and teachers. In due course, I hope that the House will support it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Ann Winterton, Miss Kate Hoey, Sir Hector Monro, Mr. Denis Howell, Sir Neil Macfarlane, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Mr. Richard Tracey, Mr. Tom Pendry, Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Mike Watson and Mrs. Sylvia Heal.

EDUCATION (SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY) (NO. 2)

Mrs. Ann Winterton accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Education Reform Act 1988 in order to make special provision for the teaching of swimming in maintained schools; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June and to be printed. [Bill 172.]

Opposition Day

[12TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Government of London

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. As many hon. Members wish to participate in the debate and I have no possibility of limiting the length of speeches in a half-day debate, I ask those on the Front Benches, and Back-Bench Members especially, to make brief contributions so that as many hon. Members as possible may be called.

3.52 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the traffic congestion, the public transport chaos, the pollution, the homelessness, the filthy streets, the inner city decay and the unemployment which have made daily life a misery for millions of Londoners; holds the Government to account for the policies which have failed London over more than a decade; reaffirms the value and importance of a capital city which can realise its full potential as a manufacturing, trading, financial and cultural centre; and endorses the need for a Labour Government which will bring to London the benefits of constructive national policies on health, education and training, housing and transport, the spur to the efficient delivery of local authority services provided by the Quality Commission, and the establishment of an elected, city-wide, strategic authority which will give Londoners a voice on the future of their city.

London is not working. Our great capital, once the world's greatest city, which has so much going for it and so great a heritage upon which to draw, is gradually grinding to a halt. Londoners may not know precisely why things are going wrong, but they certainly know that they have gone wrong. No fewer than 67 per cent. of Londoners, as revealed in an *Evening Standard* poll that was published last week, believe that services in the capital have got worse during the past 10 years.

It is not surprising that that should be their perception: they see the incontrovertible evidence in their daily lives. They see it in the overcrowded, filthy, overpriced and unreliable tube trains that make a nightmare of their daily trip to and from work. I travel regularly on the underground, and my experience, which I imagine is rarely shared by Ministers as they sweep by in their chauffeur-driven cars, but which is certainly shared by millions of other Londoners, is that there are few journeys that are not disrupted by cancellations, delays or breakdowns of one sort or another, adding frustration and chaos to what is already an uncomfortable and unpleasant experience.

London Underground's chairman, Mr. Wilfrid Newton, knows well the deficiencies of the system and the desperate need for new investment. He has described the system for which he is responsible as "an appalling shambles". That judgment is almost certain to be confirmed by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report which is to be published shortly.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I have only just begun my speech. I may give way later.

In the meantime, we are lumbered with the highest fares in Europe—twice the European average—for a system which is barely delivering an acceptable service. The inevitable consequence of a Government policy which requires London Underground to operate without subsidy is that it is compelled to try to resolve its problems by pricing customers off its trains.

Londoners also know that things have gone wrong when they see the traffic congestion and the pollution on our roads as the traffic grinds to a halt. The average speed of traffic in London today has fallen below 10 miles an hour. That sharp fall, which has occurred in the past year or two, has brought the average speed down to not much more than it was at the turn of this century.

Londoners know that things have gone wrong when they see the filthy streets, strewn with litter and disfigured by graffiti. They also see it in the cracked pavements and the derelict sites, which go some way to explain Mother Teresa's famous comment that London to her looked in many respects like a third-world city.

Londoners know that things have gone wrong when they see the housing crisis in the capital, which has produced record levels of homelessness. More than 30,000 households are in temporary accommodation, and 8,000 are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. There has been a rise of 300 per cent. in home repossessions in the capital, which compares with an already high figure of 100 per cent. in the rest of the country.

Londoners and visitors from outside the city have been shocked to see the revival of the shameful spectacle of young people begging on our streets by day and sleeping on our streets by night. We thought that that had been consigned to the Victorian era. That is the tip of a huge iceberg of unmet housing needs, which has produced the scandal of bed-and-breakfast accommodation and swollen housing waiting lists in every local authority with which surely every Conservative Member representing a London constituency must be familiar in his or her regular surgery. Unfortunately, it also produces the forcing ground for criminal practices such as those that are now being investigated by the fraud squad in Hackney.

Londoners know that things have gone wrong because of the swelling dole queues and the hopelessness felt by so many with no job prospects or opportunity to acquire the necessary skills. They know it from the boarded-up shop fronts and derelict factory sites, as London's role as a great manufacturing and trading centre is eroded by recession and business failures.

The facts of the recession in London speak for themselves. The latest figures for unemployment in London show an increase from 201,196 in April last year to 309,263 in April this year—an increase of 108,000 or 53·7 per cent. The ratio of unemployment to the number of vacancies in London is 26:1—the highest in the country. It is higher than the ratio of 25:1 in Northern Ireland and that of 9:1 in Scotland.

Business failures in London and the south-east rose by 109 per cent. between the last quarter of 1989 and 1990. Recent surveys of business confidence in the capital show clearly how business now fears even worse times. The London chamber of commerce survey for the first quarter of 1991 showed that, among the larger London firms, employing more than 250,000 staff each, fewer than 20 per cent. are operating at full strength. The *Evening Standard*/

Investors in Industry survey for April found that 94 per cent. of companies in the capital are likely to reduce, or at best maintain, their work forces in the coming year.

Londoners know that things are going wrong from the growing climate of violence and lawlessness which is the product of recession and hopelessness. It makes our streets unsafe and women afraid to leave their homes at night. The *Evening Standard* poll shows that no fewer than 69 per cent. of Londoners put their concern about the level of crime at the highest point on the scale that they were offered.

Londoners know that things are going wrong because the waiting lists for treatment in London hospitals are the longest in the country. They are particularly long in the North East Thames region—some Conservative Members who are present will know what I mean—where my constituency has the misfortune to suffer that problem, as does the constituency of the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert).

Londoners know that things are going wrong with schools, which are struggling with low morale and resources. They see it in local government services, which have been cut as a consequence of the poll tax, the imposition of capping and the unfairness of a grant system that has been skewed for political purposes. They see it, too, in the problems of the voluntary sector, so long one of the flagships of London's pride and self-confidence but now a further victim of the cuts imposed by the Government.

In short, Londoners have lost confidence in their city. That has not happened, as the Government pretend, because the Labour party says so or because we have chosen to debate London's problems, but because the reality of their daily experience confirms that life in our city is now difficult, bad-tempered and without much hope of improvement. Among those who share that perception are many who would not normally be counted as supporters of the Labour party. They include the editors of *The Sunday Times* and the *Evening Standard* and the European Commissioner for the Environment. They all agree that the quality of life in our capital city has declined alarmingly.

A staggering 46 per cent. of Londoners would like to leave the city in which they live. Only the most purblind of Governments would seek to dismiss that judgment and vote of no confidence by Londoners. *[Interruption.]*

Even aspects of London that have traditionally been its greatest strength are being put needlessly at risk. The City's role as Europe's pre-eminent financial centre is increasingly being challenged by other cities, notably Frankfurt. London's attempts to fight back are hardly helped by transport and traffic systems that are grinding to a halt. Journeys to the City from the major airports take two or three times longer than they should. *[Interruption.]*

In case anyone should take seriously the Minister of State's interjections from a sedentary position, may I make it clear that such concerns are expressed not only by the Labour party but also by such people as Sir Martin Jacomb, Chairman of Barclays De Zoete Wedd, and Mr. Stanley Yassukovich, the former chairman of the Securities Association. They are among the increasingly powerful and concerned voices who share the Opposition's concern on this issue.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Without in any way detracting from some of the hon. Gentleman's points, may I ask him to try to put the problem into a wider perspective? Many of the complaints that he has chronicled can be found in Tokyo, Paris and every major capital city throughout the world. Are we not merely listening to a catalogue of the problems of living in large urban cities?

Mr. Gould: I am grateful for the tone of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but I think that he is wrong. We have compared London's problems with those of other major capital cities such as Tokyo and Paris and of Frankfurt—the last not a capital, but an important European city—and our contention, which is widely accepted, is that London is falling behind other European cities in many respects.

The only example in which the hon. Gentleman has a point is one which I would adduce as a model to be avoided, and from which lessons can be learned—New York. I fully accept that what we describe as having gone wrong with London went wrong with New York some years earlier. We are determined that London should not go down that path. That is why we are holding this debate and why I wish to put these points on record. I want to assure Londoners that Labour Members—I suspect, to do them justice, that some Conservative Members share our concerns—are determined to avoid the fate that has befallen New York.

I was saying that even some of London's strengths have been unnecessarily undermined. London's traditional role as a great artistic and cultural centre is being increasingly put in the shade by modern European cities such as Paris, the very example given by the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst). By contrast with the vibrant cultural life, imaginative new projects, stimulus to the best modern architects and attention to its built environment and riverscape shown by Paris, London has a cultural scene dominated by holes in the roof of the Tate gallery, the forced closure of the Royal Shakespeare Company for four months earlier this year and the withdrawal of funding from Tara Arts, a world-class Asian theatre group. Even London zoo is threatened with closure by a Government who are so short-sighted that they cannot see the point of investing in an institution which is a major tourist attraction and a centre for scientific research.

The pity of it is that London's great potential remains and could be realised. London is the first of our major cities to recognise the possibility of renewing itself by moving eastwards and redeveloping those districts which hitherto have been regarded merely as the casualties of its history. As both a resident and a Member of Parliament in east London, I can hardly say too much about the sense of excitement that I feel at that prospect. The shame of it is that the task of carrying out that redevelopment was entrusted by the Government to a development corporation, the very purpose of which was to exclude the interests of local people and which has now itself fallen victim to the very market forces that it unleashed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): In my first six years in the House of Commons, there were many debates during the term of a Labour Government on how three Labour London authorities, plus the Greater London council, were unable to get anything happening in 5,000 acres of dereliction, absence of jobs, no housing and no prospects.

As to the issue of people wanting to move out, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) may consider adding

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

this point to his speech. I represent a constituency in the borough of Greenwich. It is the only place I know where there have been two polls about whether people in the outlying parts of Bromley and Bexley would like to join Greenwich. The residents of Thamesmead and the residents of Mottingham said no firmly. One of the associate factors is that Greenwich is Labour-run and Bromley and Bexley are not. It seems that the Labour party should recognise how unpopular it is in London compared with other parts of the country.

Mr. Gould: I shall deal with the state of public opinion in London in a moment.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, the London Docklands development corporation, which had the benefit of the tremendous and, we know now, unfortunate property boom, has found itself unable to use the huge sums that it managed to realise through speculation to do anything about the royal docks. Therefore, we can hardly look to the record of the LDDC as a model for achieving what was set before it as a task to serve the interests of Londoners.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Does not the experience of the LDDC show the appalling failure of the Government and their lack of planning policy? The docklands district is suffering because there is no proper road and rail infrastructure into it. Do not the Government have a Singapore mentality towards docklands, in that they ignore the surrounding districts, turning them into a sort of third world? *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend knows a good deal more about such problems than some of the Conservative Members who are laughing uproariously.

London can provide the gateway to Europe and constitute the essential fulcrum for opening up to new markets and influences which will be so important to our national economy as a whole. That cannot be achieved as long as what the director general of the Confederation of British Industry describes as an

"apparent allergy to strategic thinking"

means that, in his view, it will be northern France, not London and the south-east of England, that will benefit from the channel tunnel and the single European market.

London's capacity to act as a magnet for the best and brightest talent remains undimmed. London has an unrivalled cultural heritage, which should continue to put our city in the forefront of European civilisation.

These high hopes of a revival of pride and confidence in our city can be achieved, but they have been needlessly undermined and betrayed by Government policies over more than a decade. Those policies have to a large extent been applied on a national scale, but they have had a particularly unfortunate impact on our capital city. They are essentially, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) said a moment ago, policies of disengagement, of non-intervention, of unfettered market forces—summed up in one word: under-investment.

I refer, for instance, to under-investment in housing; insanely, London boroughs, like other local authorities, have been prevented from spending their own money on grappling with a housing problem which is ticking away like a time bomb about to explode. That is just one aspect of this unremitting hostility to local government which has made the administration of London so difficult.

There has been under-investment in the transport system, which not only creates misery for those who have to use it but which presents a real threat to the city's economic viability because the deficiencies in our transport system act as such a disincentive to new investment in the capital.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the draft Labour Budget presented by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) contains no provision for increased spending on public transport in London? How much is he now proposing to spend, and has he agreed it with the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)?

Mr. Gould: First, there never was any such thing as a draft Labour Budget; secondly, even if there had been and if the hon. Gentleman knew anything about Budgets, he would know that it would not have included provision for public spending.

Under-investment is seen at its most striking in education and training, in the health service and in protecting the environment. This under-investment leaves London and Londoners ill equipped to face a competitive future in which other European cities are forging ahead.

In addition to suffering from national policies, however, London has suffered from a particular set of Government policies that have disadvantaged the capital in special ways. Londoners have suffered from the impact of the poll tax and the damage resulting from the imposition of capping. They have suffered from the skewing of the grant system. But foremost among all these acts of damage was the act of political spite which, with the abolition of the GLC, deprived our city of a Londonwide voice.

Ministers who argue that Londoners were glad to see the demise of the GLC misrepresent the public attitude of the time and fail to understand the mood of Londoners today. The *Evening Standard* poll shows that two out of three Londoners want a voice for London, with the great majority of them favouring an elected citywide authority. Only one in five favour making no change, yet, with unerring accuracy, that is the very position adopted by the Secretary of State, whose absence today is notable. It shows how little interest he has in the future fortunes of our capital city.

This is precisely the position that the right hon. Gentleman adopts in his consultative paper, paragraph 28 of which states baldly:

"The Government have no plans to change the general structure of local government in London."

Jibes at the GLC are hardly an adequate response to the overwhelming demand for change and for a London voice.

Londoners know that it is nonsense that our city, uniquely, has no citywide voice, no one capable of taking a strategic view of the needs and interests that we share as Londoners or of the future that should be ours. They see the contrast between London and other British cities, each of which has a citywide administration. They see the contrast with every other major capital city in the world. They know, for example, that London's ill-fated Olympic bid could not be taken seriously as long as there was no one to speak for London. They know that to insist that

London is no more than a collection of boroughs that should be governed accordingly is to deny London's sense of community and identity, its history and its future.

As the *Evening Standard's* leading article put it on 28 May—I do not often quote leading articles from the *Evening Standard*—Londoners

"look upon themselves first and foremost as Londoners—citizens of the greatest, most historic, most beautiful and most-visited capital city in the world".

That is why Londoners support our proposals.

In the hands of a Labour Government, our measures will provide London with the benefits of national policies for investment in the basic public services, and a priority commitment to the improvement of those services rather than to an increase in consumption through tax cuts and unsustainable credit booms. Londoners will want the benefits that will flow to a local administration from a Government who value the role of local government and who want to see boroughs fulfilling their proper role in building houses, protecting the local environment, helping, in partnership with the private sector, to regenerate the local economy, and delivering high-quality services.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): In the hon. Gentleman's great tour de raison of London, one issue does not seem to have been addressed. Most pollsters are aware of the London Labour factor, which shows how voters in London consistently turn against the Labour party in any national evaluation of opinion. A resident of Lambeth who looks at what is happening in Wandsworth sees clearly what is wrong with London. It is that too many London boroughs are controlled by the Labour party.

Mr. Gould: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is not the assiduous reader of the *Evening Standard* that I took him to be. If he had read with care and attention the poll results published last week on precisely this subject, he would have discovered not only overwhelming support for every aspect of our proposals but the fact that Londoners, by a margin of four percentage points—43 per cent. to 39 per cent.—support Labour rather than his party. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to make something of the difference between that lead and the lead of six percentage points that we enjoy in national polls, but I do not think that he wants to draw too much attention to those figures.

Londoners will especially welcome our proposals for a quality commission to encourage and promote the establishment and monitoring of high standards, which will be published and checkable, and for the provision for individual citizens of effective remedies if those standards are not met. Despite the Johnny-come-lately efforts of the Prime Minister to jump on the bandwagon, those measures offer a more real and certain prospect of efficient administration than can be offered by any Government who remain fundamentally hostile to local government.

Above all, Londoners want a new citywide, strategic, elected authority that will address the strategic interests of our capital city. They want a streamlined, professional, proactive, enabling authority that will take in hand the strategic planning of land use and economic development, the planning of our transport needs and the provision of our fire, police and emergency services. That authority will encourage our cultural life and will adopt an overall strategy to protect our environment.

Londoners have already responded to what we have said. They understand that we understand. We are offering them a compact for London. They want our policies, and they want a Labour Government. In their response to our forward-looking proposals for the capital, Londoners have shown that they are ready, willing and able to play their part in electing a Labour Government.

4.18 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move, in line 1 to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'deplores the habit of the Labour Party to run down London in a way which, if taken seriously, would damage its image abroad, deter foreign investors and bring glee to London's competitor cities overseas; emphasises that London is one of the world's finest cities with cultural and business attractions which have few rivals, a transport system as extensive as any in Europe and international hub airports which are the envy of others; welcomes the decision of the Government to relieve London of the unnecessary and highly wasteful Greater London Council; deplores Labour's plans to establish a still more wasteful London-wide body with powers to control the police which even the Greater London Council did not have; welcomes the Government's enormous investment programme in public transport and in infrastructure in Docklands; and salutes the Government's achievements of the last 12 years which have raised Britain's reputation abroad and with it that of her capital city'.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning are abroad. I know that they would have liked to speak in the debate. However, I am pleased that their absence gives me as a Londoner an opportunity to say that I am proud of this city and will happily compare its facilities and attractions with those of any city in the world. I take seriously my responsibility to speak up for London. I deplore Labour's attempts to denigrate our city, to make nothing of its recent achievements, and to blow its problems out of all recognition. The Opposition are doing all that they can to deter the foreign investor, to destroy tourism, and to damage our capital's economy.

When people in Frankfurt and Paris read the motion tabled by the Labour party today, they will be whooping for joy. The difference between our city and those cities is that they do not have a Labour party to run them down in public.

How much more honest it would have been to have said that, yes, London suffers problems—problems much like those of other cities. But to refer to problems such as dirty streets as Labour does in its motion is to score a splendid own goal. People in Westminster do not complain about dirty streets, but people in Lambeth, Camden, Haringey and Islington do because there the Labour boroughs are failing to do their duty.

Many of London's problems are the problems of a successful city. Overcrowded tubes and congested roads are the sign of a city which is alive and flourishing, not a city on its knees.

How much more honest it would have been of the Labour party to say that most people regard our traffic as better than that in Paris, Rome or Madrid, or to say that the M25, although crowded in the rush hours, is none the less Europe's longest orbital urban motorway, which has made possible a range of journeys which people could not contemplate before.

How much more honest it would have been to acknowledge that London's vast underground system is 100 years old, one of the deepest in the world, requiring massive investment and today benefiting from a huge programme of investment of which the Labour party could

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

not have dreamt. It is all the more needed today because, during the years in which the GLC owned the underground, as the irresponsible populist that it was, it cut the fares and so cut investment too, which is now having to be made good.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Would the Minister care to point out to the House that the capital programme for London Regional Transport was under the control of the Government of the day via their majority in Parliament who were able to determine whether or not the money Bill was passed, and who, in preliminary negotiations with Treasury Ministers acting under Government instruction, told not just the Labour administration but the previous administration of Sir Horace Cutler that they would not allow the level of investment in London Regional Transport that successive GLC administrations wished?

Mr. Portillo: I am delighted to have drawn the hon. Gentleman to his feet. Those watching the debate at home will welcome the opportunity to be reminded about the government of London that we have shaken off, which is amply represented by the hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I will answer the question by saying that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) spoke throughout his speech of under-investment, but last year investment in the underground was more than double in real terms what it was in the last year of the GLC, and our plans are to invest yet more in the underground.

The Government have a comprehensive strategy for improving transport in London. During the next three years, London Regional Transport plans to invest more than £3 billion, supported by a Government grant of £2·5 billion—an increase of 120 per cent. in real terms over the previous three years.

Talk to people in London. They have seen the opening of the new Thameslink service and the refurbishment of Liverpool Street station. We will be opening up docklands and poorly served areas of south-east London with the Jubilee line extension, which will cost more than £1 billion. The Bank extension of the docklands light railway will open on 1 July, and the Beckton extension will open at the end of next year. That will bring investment in the railway to some £700 million. A Bill providing for an extension to Lewisham is now before Parliament. We are also committed to another vast project: the east-west crossrail, which will link Paddington with Liverpool Street, bringing substantial relief to central London commuters. We have already safeguarded the routes of the Chelsea-Hackney underground railway line.

Unlike the Labour party, whose recent policy document talks glibly of a transport policy for London that

"takes traffic off the streets",

we recognise the reality—that many journeys and deliveries in London cannot easily be made by rail. We also recognise that massive road building in London is unacceptable. We have a programme involving expenditure of nearly £2 billion over the next 10 years, to make selective improvements to our trunk road networks and junctions and to get rid of the worst bottlenecks and accident blackspots.

We also want to get more out of the existing road network, by means of better traffic management. The New Roads and Street Works Bill will lead to the proper co-ordination of street works. We plan a 300-mile network of red routes through our capital, on which traffic will move more easily, reliably and safely. Journey times on the pilot red route scheme established in north London have already been cut by up to 30 per cent.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Minister may well be right in saying that journey times for commuter traffic have been cut on the pilot red route. Takings in the shops along the route, however, have fallen dramatically, by 30 or 40 per cent., and the local people do not like the scheme and want it to be scrapped.

Mr. Portillo: Clearly the Labour party is opposed to any action that may cause problems. A succession of Labour Members have objected to private Bills relating to public transport—because they have some constituency interest, or because they have been put up to it. Time and again, public transport proposals are presented to the House and Labour Members object to them. Here is a proposal to get the traffic moving—including the buses, which also benefit from red routes.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: Sure enough, as soon as a solution is advanced, we can look for the Labour Member who has jumped to his feet.

Mr. Banks: Surely the Minister remembers that it was the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) who objected to the last private Bill relating to London's transport: indeed, he attempted to talk it out. The Minister should get his facts right. There are many reasons why hon. Members may object to Bills. It is not that we do not want transport infrastructure investment; we want to ensure that it is the right kind of investment.

Mr. Portillo: I made no mistake in my facts, as the hon. Gentleman's remarks implicitly acknowledged. It remains absolutely true that many Labour Members oppose private Bills relating to public transport.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): The question of red routes greatly affects my constituency. Two main problems have arisen. The first is the speed at which the traffic now moves along the red route, and the failure of the police to take steps to reduce the speed and the resulting danger. The previous problem, which was caused by congestion, has been reversed.

The second problem is experienced by a number of local tradesmen who find that parking bays sited on the advice of the local authority are too far from their shop frontages. Can that problem be examined?

Mr. Portillo: One of the great sadnesses in my life is the fact that I am no longer a Transport Minister. I shall, however, ensure that my hon. Friend's points are taken up. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will be winding up the debate, and I shall draw those remarks to his attention.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Portillo: Yes, although I had better not do so too many more times.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) mentioned the problem of speeding vehicles. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that, in large parts of London, cameras are triggered automatically by vehicles that jump the traffic lights, and that the motorists responsible are prosecuted automatically. Is that not a substantial improvement in the policing of London?

Mr. Portillo: It is certainly a good idea for us to be able to enforce the operation of traffic lights more effectively, for safety reasons.

Let us look further ahead. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport recently announced a wide-ranging study of traffic congestion in urban areas, which will include consideration of the possible role of road pricing in London and other cities.

The Labour party lives off grumbles and dissatisfaction as part of its election strategy. It does not matter that in the process it may demoralise our capital and do it untold harm.

Let no one be fooled into believing that the answer to London's problems is a new strategic body. If people believe that the streets are dirty, let them look to their borough councils which have clear responsibilities and let them use the Government's Environmental Protection Act 1990 to oblige inefficient Labour councils to do their duty.

If people are worried about those sleeping on the streets —they can be seen in every capital city—they should know that it is the Government who provided the London boroughs with a special homelessness initiative of £179 million to enable homeless families to be permanently housed, and that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has worked tirelessly with the voluntary sector to persuade people off the streets and into the direct access hostels which are there for them.

If people are worried about transport, they should know, as I have explained, that transport policy in London is already brought together under a single roof in the Department of Transport. That includes the underground, Network SouthEast, the strategic roads and the buses, and now those services have the resources that they need.

If people are concerned about the need to co-ordinate planning, let me remind them that the Government have issued strategic planning guidance in place of the prescriptive, over-detailed GLC strategic framework which took 11 years to complete. In contrast, the present guidance as produced within a year of receiving the London planning advisory committee's advice. It allows the boroughs greater discretion in planning the development of their own areas and communities. They have quietly welcomed the new guidance as at last offering them a chance to bring forward comprehensive local plans that will reduce the old reliance on appeals to settle planning applications.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: No. I want to keep going for a while.

As I have said, it took the GLC 11 years to produce its master plan and, when it finally emerged, inevitably it was out of date. It is no wonder that in those days the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) described the GLC as

"the slowest bureaucracy this side of the Kremlin".

Meanwhile, areas such as docklands were left to rot, neglected by the GLC and the London Labour boroughs.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: I intend to quote the hon. Gentleman again. Would he like to save his intervention until then?

The GLC is unlamented and unmourned. It spent £1 billion a year, it increased its spending by 170 per cent. in five years, and it employed nearly 20,000 people. For what? Who misses its grants to the Fleet street and Media Workers creche, Babies Against the Bomb or the South-East London Women for Life on Earth? It is no wonder that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that the sooner it was abolished the better.

Mr. Dobson: I do not resile from either of the quotations. When the GLC was a major provider of housing and direct services such as that, it was far too vast and it was one of the slowest bureaucracies in the world. That was why I believed that it should be abolished. If the Minister had given the whole quotation, he would have realised that I wanted the GLC to be replaced by an authority covering the whole of London and with genuine strategic duties to carry out. Therefore, I am being perfectly consistent.

Mr. Portillo: I shall deal shortly with the vastness of the body that may be proposed by the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) used to be the leader of the GLC. He said that he regretted that

"the Marshall Report did not push and say, 'Abolish the GLC' because I think it would have released massive resources which could have been put to more productive use".

No wonder——

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar) *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: If the hon. Lady will forgive me, I shall keep going.

It is no wonder that the Labour party is ashamed of the GLC.

Mr. Tony Banks: Not at all.

Mr. Portillo: I wish that the Labour party would get its act together. Whenever the hon. Member for Dagenham writes, appears in public or speaks on the radio—I am surprised that we keep hearing him on the radio, given his track record—he has to say that the Labour party does not intend to recreate the GLC. Therefore, it is clear that at least the hon. Member for Dagenham is ashamed of it. Unfortunately, when the hon. Gentleman says that he is not aiming to recreate the GLC, he is right: he is aiming to create something bigger, more bureaucratic and with wider powers.

Mr. Gorst: Surely what my hon. Friend the Minister is saying is that, although there may be no objection to a voice and an intelligent head, there is every objection to a large body with the fat corporation that goes with it.

Mr. Portillo: My pleasure in agreeing with my hon. Friend is mitigated to some extent only by the fact that he has stolen the next two pages of my speech.

Mr. Gould: If the Minister is going to use the next two pages of his speech to endorse his hon. Friend's comments are we to hear another U-turn this afternoon and a commitment to precisely the voice for London which his hon. Friend commended to him?

Mr. Portillo: Why does not the hon. Gentleman merely be patient and hear my speech?

Let us look more closely at the recent Labour party document. In many areas, its so-called "streamlined" GLA would have more extensive powers than the GLC ever enjoyed. It would control the fire service, land-use planning, tourism, and culture, and it would have oversight of London Regional Transport and traffic movements. Most significantly of all, it is proposed to give the GLA authority over the police. The GLC in its day gave more than £2 million to so-called police monitoring groups. In 1983-84 it gave £8,500 to the Campaign to Curb Police Powers, nearly £18,000 to the Gay London Police Monitoring Group and nearly £30,000 to Camden Policing the Police. To those people it is now proposed to hand over authority for the police.

The lure of such new powers prompted the hon. Member for Brent, East, the former leader of the GLC, to summon a meeting of the GLC in exile to be held in the House next week. The Labour leadership moved in to crush so transparent an exposure of its true intentions and cancelled the meeting.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: I shall give way at the conclusion of my speech.

A spokeswoman for the Labour party said:

"It was just an old boys reunion, if you like . . . I know they've never had a reunion before, but it was just an ad hoc sort of thing."

None the less, we were assured that the hon. Members for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) "completely disassociated" themselves from the meeting, although why anyone should disassociate himself from "an old boys' reunion" or from

"an ad hoc sort of thing"

is not clear to me.

Mr. Banks: The Minister is making a ridiculous fool of himself by trying to suggest that there was a conspiracy. The person who wanted to organise the get-together was Harry Kay, the vice-chairman of the council. I resisted it for a long time because I thought that it would be very expensive on my pocket to buy drinks for Harry and all his mates, but he managed to get Ken Livingstone to do it. Ken fell for it.

Mr. Portillo: The old boy doth protest too much, I think.

If people are concerned to hear a single voice for London, singing London's praises and promoting London to the outside world, bringing together the public and the private sectors, then I have some sympathy.

We had in London a single organisation of the London boroughs, the London Boroughs Association. It did not support the GLC, so the Labour boroughs took their bat home. They went off to form a rival body—the Association of London Authorities—thus ensuring that London's voice would be cracked and discordant. Across London, Labour's antipathy to the private sector, to the City and to the people who make London work has meant that it holds back from joining with the wealth-creators to promote London. Indeed, today's motion shows that it wishes to denigrate London, not promote it.

That same antipathy to enterprise has guided Labour Members in their opposition to the regeneration of docklands. They opposed the creation of the LDDC. They carp about the immense achievements of the development there. They sing the praises of windswept, brutalist modern architecture in Paris, whilst attacking the beautiful fountains, parks, and riverside walkways of Canary wharf —simply because no bureaucrat in county hall had a hand in planning Canary wharf.

Despite the Labour party, other world cities look with envy at docklands as the area where the city can expand, a vast area where new growth can occur without putting an intolerable burden on our traditional centres.

If people want to know the truth about London, they should not ask the Labour party. They should ask the people who have money to invest. In a recent survey of American leading managers, 49 per cent. named London as their preferred European business location against 17 per cent. for Brussels and 17 per cent. for Frankfurt. London scored best on ease of access to markets, customers or clients, telecommunications, and the costs and availability of staff. It also scored highly on transport —yes, second only to Paris—availability of office space and on the climate that the Government create for business.

Can anyone seriously imagine that such people's propensity to invest in London would be encouraged if London were once again represented by the hon. Member for Brent, East as leader? Can anyone imagine that Japanese business men would feel more warmly about investing in London if they were met at Heathrow by the hon. Gentleman? Can anyone seriously believe that London would stand taller just because we put another layer of bureaucracy over our heads?

Can anyone seriously believe that London would enjoy the worldwide attention that it does today were it not for the fact that, after 12 years of Conservative government, Britain once again counts for so much in the world? London does not need another layer of government: it needs less Labour government in places such as Lambeth. Even the Labour party seems to agree, since it has now suspended Joan Twelves, the leader, and many of her colleagues.

In 1987, it was the London Labour party which first set Labour nationally on the skids for the general election. The London Labour party's proposals to recreate the waste and silliness of the GLC, and extend its powers to the police, are another albatross around the neck of the Labour party. Labour's proposals are immoderate, wasteful and plain dangerous. That is why I urge the House to support the amendment.

4.42 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): No-one would wish to re-create the GLC in the form in which it existed. Let us remember that it was not created by a Labour Government. It was created by a Conservative Government under Harold Macmillan, in order to ensure Conservative control of the capital. In the debates and discussions that took place on the White Paper, many good ideas were suggested. Those ideas were endorsed by a broad consensus in local government, by academics and by the business community. But they were ignored in the legislation that created and set up the GLC.

From its beginning, the GLC was flawed. It was caught between being a strategic authority without the powers to perform that function and a body which overlapped and conflicted with the boroughs in the provision of personal

services. That was recipe for conflict. The personal services should have been the responsibility of the boroughs. It was nonsense to create an authority that had such a vast housing stock. But the Government of the day did not want to create a proper strategic body, because it would have meant surrendering some of the powers of central Government to people elected by Londoners, who might take a different view from that of the Administration of the day. That is why I spoke against the GLC when I was a member of it. It had completely lost its way.

Between 1981 and 1985, we made no pretence. We did our best with a flawed structure. In starting afresh, we shall not repeat that mistake. When I spoke in the debate which has been much quoted, I was thinking in particular of the metropolitan authority that controlled Toronto—one of the most successful cities in north America. Toronto has doubled its size and is one of the most attractive cities to live in. It has a strategic, slimline authority which co-ordinates and deals with major policy such as transportation, industrial regeneration, training and so on. But it does not get involved in day-to-day service delivery. That is the model that we shall wish to develop, explore and expand.

When I hear some of the old nonsense that we have just had to put up with, I wish that I had tape-recorded some of my conversations with Ministers when I was leader of the GLC. I remind Conservative Members that, as leader of the GLC, I met some of them in their previous incarnations when they were blocking what we sought to do.

When the Labour GLC was elected in 1981, we took up the legacy of Sir Horace Cutler to create a docklands tube by extending the Jubilee line out there. That proposal had been blocked under Sir Horace's administration and was still blocked. Within the first few weeks of the election, I went to see the Conservative Minister of Transport. I put our proposals to him. We were told that we could not implement them. It was not that we were asking the Government to give us the money—we were prepared to build the tube out to docklands out of our revenue.

The GLC was opposed to borrowing. Conservative Members who pretend to be monetarists might like to examine the accounts of the GLC. The only borrowing for capital works that we undertook was for housing, because the Government of the day were prepared to pay about 80 per cent. of the cost. All the remaining capital works of the GLC were paid for as we went.

During the lifetime of my administration at county hall, we almost halved the debt burden of the GLC in real terms. We do not want to hear this nonsense about profligacy. If central Government had reduced their debt burden by half in their 12 years, the nation would be in a much better state.

We were not in conflict with the City. The chambers of commerce and industry came to see me as leader of the GLC in the midst of another downturn in the economy caused by the Government. They said that they were straining, and asked us to reduce the rates that year by 7·5 per cent. We co-operated with them and did so. We cut the rates twice. Why were we able to do so? It was as a result of the success of our transport policy.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): If we accept what the hon. Gentleman says, why did he and his deputies try to lie to the British public in the last years of the GLC and say that £140 million had to be cut from GLC spending? The hon. Gentleman knows that his deputy was lying to him and that documents were shredded. In the end, the GLC had to increase expenditure, not reduce it by £140 million.

Mr. Livingstone: There was an internal power struggle inside the GLC Labour group. Fortunately, I won it. It was remarkably similar to the problems which are afflicting the Government today. They are in conflict about the direction in which they should be moving.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman is a liar.

Mr. Livingstone: What we proposed——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The hon. Gentleman is calling my hon. Friend a liar.

Mr. Livingstone: It will not be the first time or the last time, but I am not terribly worried about it.

We proposed a policy to use the engine of London Transport to make London more attractive. We cut the fares. However, we did not assume that that was all that had to be done. We wanted a programme for massive capital investment. We were blocked year after year by the Government.

We also recognised that, to be truly effective, we needed a completely integrated transport system. We wanted to integrate British Rail services throughout great areas of south London, and other areas where it was the main form of transport, with London Transport. We wanted to put money into British Rail so that it could increase the frequency of its services to match those on the tube, and reduce its fares to the level of tube fares.

I went to see the Conservative Minister of Transport in July 1981. I said that the GLC would give the money to British Rail to enable it to do what we proposed. The Minister, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) who still represents the Conservative party in the House, said, "If you proceed with that policy, we shall cut the Government grant to British Rail by an equivalent amount in order to invalidate it." That was simple, narrow, partisan, ideological opposition to what we were doing.

When people say that London does not want to go back to the days of the GLC, I say, "You have not been travelling on London transport." Every day, I am stopped by people on London transport. I am stopped not only by transport users, but even by drivers of black cabs, who are not usually members of the International Marksist Group or a natural constituency of the Labour party. One can hardly find anyone today who is dependent on public transport, or who drives around London in a car, who does not regret the passing of the GLC. They remember the first few years of the 1980s, which saw a reduction in traffic congestion and fares cuts, with a 5 per cent. fall in the numbers of commuter cars on the streets of London. Every taxi driver remembers that period, because they recollect being able to get around more easily. Industry was also able to get its goods and services to the point of production more easily.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Either the hon. Gentleman is being disingenuous, or his memory is failing him. The traffic reduction of which he speaks occurred

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

after the fares fair policy had been ruled illegal. What the hon. Gentleman is telling the House is simply not true—and he knows it.

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman is probably confused by the fact that the figures were published after the judges ruled that our policy was illegal. We did not have long. We cut the fares in October, and Lord Denning stuck his oar in in December. It was not until January or February that the traffic statistics were published. When we cut the fares a second time, in 1983, exactly the same thing happened. Some London firms even cancelled their car and petrol allowances and gave their employees bus and tube passes instead. They recognised the financial advantages of doing that, as well as the overall benefit to London.

I urge those who say that Labour's policy will be an albatross around its neck that they should talk to Londoners. They should talk to the people waiting in a queue for a bus. They should ask people how much longer they wait today, and how much longer they must allow for their journey to work. I know from talking to people on buses that, whereas they used to allow half an hour to get to work, today they must allow 45 minutes. It is not all a matter of congestion, because there are fewer buses on the roads.

When a bus does arrive, because it is on one-man operation, it stands there causing congestion while the driver has to take the fares. That is a disastrous practice in a heavily congested and densely populated city. That policy has been adopted not to increase mobility but to achieve cost savings, and it was pushed through under pressure from central Government. During the five years of the Labour GLC, we resisted all further moves to one-person operation.

I was interested in the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the quality commission, which will give citizens the right to challenge the level of services. I would like to think that we will extend that concept nationwide. I fail to see why only Londoners should be given an opportunity to mobilise pressure on local authorities when they are not providing a proper level of service.

It is clear from the faces of Conservative Members that they know that Labour's policy is popular. For the first time, a Labour Government will have the time to create a local government structure for London. In the past, local government reorganisation has been undertaken by Conservative Administrations, which I deeply regret. There has never been a system that accurately reflected basic socialist principles of efficiency.

There is no inherent commitment to waste in socialism. When we ran London Transport, we made it clear that no extra jobs were to be created in its central bureaucracy, but that that bureaucracy was to be scaled down. We saw a shift of resources into direct service provision. I want to see that concept applied across the whole range of Government services. The new authority and the quality commission will give us an opportunity to begin reconstructing London's government.

4.53 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. and hon. Friends and I welcome this debate on the government of London. We have been calling for one for some time to highlight the problems that exist in London, particularly in Labour borough councils.

The motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and other Labour Members is incredible. In its references to pollution, homelessness, filthy streets and inner-city decay, the motion draws attention to precisely what we and so many Londoners know to be the state of affairs in Labour-controlled boroughs. That is where the BBC and ITV should take their cameras. They should show that the problems to which the motion refers are not those of Conservative boroughs, where one sees waste bins, swept streets and the provision of proper services.

The motion refers also to realising London's

"full potential as a manufacturing, trading, financial and cultural centre"—

as if Labour could achieve that. One has only to examine the facts to know that London has already attracted numerous financial institutions. There are more American banks represented in London than in New York. Some 270 foreign banks have opened offices in Germany, but 478 have realised the need to open offices in London. The sum of $900 billion has been deposited in the form of Eurocurrency in London. That is one fifth of the world total and equivalent to all the Eurofunds deposited elsewhere within the European Community. That is the London that we understand, and as it is understood in Europe and the wider world—on the other side of the Atlantic and of the channel. Tourists spend £4·5 billion each year in London, and some 80 per cent. of that figure is in foreign currency.

Labour's new policy document was rather appropriately launched as its leaders floated down the river a couple of weeks ago. They are trying to draw a smokescreen over London Labour authorities. Their vision of London is that represented by the Labour group whip on Brent council, Councillor Cyril Shaw, in his recent letter to the Labour members of Brent council:

"We need, above all, to win back the confidence of the electorate, and that will not be possible if we are seen as a disorganised, undisciplined rabble."

The *New Statesman* is not necessarily a journal that is friendly towards the Conservative party, but in a recent article, it stated:

"Labour local authorities have provided the sole model of Labour in power in the past decade, and many have given the electorate a good fright."

That is why Labour constantly attempts to portray London as a dirty city. As my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, that is a disgraceful allegation. Labour is running down London in the eyes of the rest of the world, thus proving that it is so carried away with its public relations designs that it is prepared even to damage the reputation of our capital in the minds of tourists and foreign business men.

There are many examples of inefficiency in Labour authorities in London. In 1987, Brent council apparently lost £8·8 million in grant because it was five months' late in submitting budget details to the Government. Its failure to submit a claim for repairs after the hurricane in October 1987 cost it a further £750,000. Camden council, another model of Labour party control of a borough, has a startling record of financial mismanagement. Facts show

that the building department overcharged the housing department by £100,000 for jobs, some of which had not not even been started. Those are a couple of examples of how Labour party behaves in power, yet it is seeking to impose a further tier of government on London.

My hon. Friends and I have often cited disgraceful examples of rent arrears and empty houses in Labour-controlled boroughs in London. The facts show that those authorities have the worst arrears in council rents and the most empty council houses, which could be used to house homeless people and solve, at a stroke, the problems of homelessness that we see so close to central London. Brent, which was Labour-controlled until two of its members sensibly crossed the floor recently, tops the list, followed by Lambeth, Southwark, Hackney, Islington, Ealing before it became Conservative-controlled —the Leader of the Opposition may have voted for the right party in the May elections—Haringey, Waltham Forest and Newham. Those councils, with a little contribution from Liverpool, are the worst in the country and are owed a total of £135 million in council rents. That is a disgraceful record.

Education has been called the "big idea" by the Labour party. What would happen if London's education authorities were Labour-controlled? Presumably they would follow the examples of the authorities that are at the bottom of the league table and produce the worst results in Britain for their children, such as the unlamented Inner London education authority, which was close to the bottom of the league table, Waltham Forest, Brent, Newham and Barking. Those are examples of what we believe is typical of the Labour party's education standards.

It is perhaps an opportune moment to quote what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) told the 1990 Labour party conference:

"our nation and our children deserve the best; from us they shall get the best."

As the press has revealed today, he is seeking the best for his children by sending his 11-year-old to a school in the City of Westminster, which is controlled by the Conservative party, and, as a new education authority following the abolition of ILEA, firmly intends to achieve fine results for its children.

Mr. Dobson: Has the hon. Gentleman considered what the city of Westminster intends to do to finance its education service in the next year? Is he aware that it has made no allowance for inflation, and therefore will insist on substantial cuts in its education service? Like my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who lives just across the river from Westminster, some of my constituents send their children to Westminster schools, just as Westminster parents send their children to schools in Camden because, under ILEA, boundaries did not matter. Is he aware that a substantial number of my constituents have written to complain about job cuts in Westminster's schools as a result of the policy of the Government and of that council?

Mr. Tracey: That was a long intervention. The hon. Gentleman simply must talk to the hon. Member for Blackburn, who presumably is the Labour party's expert on education and who chooses, in the cool light of his own judgment, to send his child across the river to Westminster. Westminster has said that it will run an efficient education authority. It will allocate resources to the classroom rather than to an over-fat bureaucracy, which was ILEA and the GLC before that.

While the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is on the subject of Labour education authorities, he might like to note that Haringey recommended that education authorities should establish full-time posts both to promote anti-heterosexual attitudes in education and to fight to abolish all laws and procedures that seek to restrict sex education to the promotion of family values. That is what the Labour party is up to in the classroom and in its education authorities—quietly, of course, behind the scenes and not too publicly lest it ruins any slight chance that it might have of impressing the electorate with its public relations programme.

We hear that the Labour party wants a Greater London authority—a lean and hungry beast, and quite unlike the GLC. The Herbert commission's idea of an all-London authority was for it to be lean and hungry, but that lean and hungry beast grew to have 22,000 staff and to spend £1,000 million. I suspect that this lean and hungry beast would soon grow into a rather fat creature similar to the GLC, which failed to be a strategic authority or to do anything with docklands or about traffic in south London. In 1964, the south circular road began its life under the GLC as a collection of signposts; in 1985, it finished its life under the GLC as a collection of signposts. Despite that, Labour Members claim that the GLC was a strategic authority. It took 11 years to produce a strategy, by which time it was out of date.

There is no earthly reason why any sensible person in London should want a Greater London authority. It would have little to do—the GLC was responsible for only 10 per cent. of the administration of London—and would spend its time producing motions about South Africa, eastern Europe and Northern Ireland, as we know only too well. That is not the voice for London that we want.

I should point out to the House an interesting comparison which I assume was made 10 days ago on television. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and I were presented with a film about Birmingham—a city which apparently has great civic pride and achieves great things for its people. Since then I have done a little research into Birmingham council and I do not believe that the people of Birmingham are too keen on it.

A new Greater London authority might follow the example of the Labour-run Birmingham city council, especially with regard to foreign trips for councillors. Birmingham charge payers paid for 149 trips to 31 countries, including Puerto Rico, the Gambia, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, the United States of America, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and the Soviet Union. The most popular destination was France, with 29 trips by Birmingham city councillors. Cannot we just imagine that that is what the 100 slimline, lean and hungry councillors of the new Greater London authority would be up to? It is not surprising that when Birmingham city council funded a MORI poll to find out whether the people of Birmingham liked their council, it found that three out of four residents thought that the council wasted public money and only a minority were in any way satisfied with the key services.

Some of my hon. Friends want to speak in the debate, especially, I suspect, about transport matters, so I shall bring my remarks to a close. Londoners do not want another elected supra-tier authority. The Government are

[Mr. Tracey]

inviting opinions from the rest of the country on unitary authorities. As long ago as 1979, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) told us that he thought that London should be run in that way. The people of London recognised unitary authorities as the best way to run London. That way, they know where the bills are coming from. The people of London feel that they get the most intimate and immediate administration of local areas from unitary authorities.

It is a great tragedy that when the GLC was abolished, out of spite the Labour party decided to take its bat and ball home, pull out of the London Boroughs Association and form the Association of London Authorities. The LBA is the vehicle through which we should unify the voice of London, transmit it to the Government and, when necessary, bring it to the attention of the wider world. The Government should consider restoring the LBA as a body where the leaders of all 32 boroughs and the City of London come together.

I have spoken to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Transport about transport in London. Travel and transport over the whole London conurbation should be overseen by a single Transport Minister, who would simply have the responsibility for travel and transport in London. In that way, we could move towards the kind of administration that our people desire for the smooth running of London. We certainly do not want our capital city to be run down, as the Labour party has run it down both in the debate and too regularly in recent weeks.

5.14 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the opportunity for this debate. It has already shown evidence of the trouble caused when party politics overrides the views of Londoners.

In his opening speech, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) correctly stated the litany of complaints of Londoners about how degraded the city is. Ministers should not pretend that there are not abundant and regular complaints from Londoners about how awful it is to live and work here. But the hon. Member for Dagenham failed to deal with one of the chief complaints of Londoners—the fact that, where the Labour party is in government, it governs badly, wastes resources and gives a bad service. A MORI opinion poll commissioned in Southwark revealed that 85 per cent. of people are dissatisfied with services in Southwark.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: A Labour council.

Mr. Hughes: Exactly. London Labour councils are generally doing a bad job. If the hon. Member for Dagenham is to persuade Londoners that London would be better under Labour, he has a lot of persuading to do.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities says that it is terrible to run London down because London is wonderful and there are no problems, or if there are problems, they are all the fault of Labour boroughs. That is not true either. One of the obvious failings of the past decade or so has been the Government's failure to deal with strategic issues—a fact recognised not only by politicians but by many objective commentators, too.

In common with other hon. Members, I received a document today from Hillier Parker, one of the largest London firms dealing with development. The covering letter said:

"Over the last eighteen months, Hillier Parker have voiced the property industry's growing concern that the near critical absence of any strategic planning regime in the capital is the consequence of a lack of London-wide coordination in local government".

Both the Labour party and the Conservative party pretend that they have all the answers. The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) fears that, if there is a new Londonwide body, the councillors will get on the gravy train and start taking trips round the world. They may or they may not, depending on who they are, but that accusation, coming from one of the Members of this House, so many of whom float around the world at public expense, is a bit rich.

London is a city where no party has the support of a majority of the people. At the moment, the city is balanced. The Londonwide bodies have no overall party control. There is not a majority of London boroughs run by Labour, by the Conservatives or by the Liberal Democrats. Opinion polls have been referred to, but when opinion polls ask people which party they would support, no party gets a majority of the support of Londoners, either.

The hon. Member for Dagenham was right when he said that the latest poll revealed that 43 per cent. would support Labour, 39 per cent. the Conservatives and 13 per cent. the Liberal Democrats. That represents the same sort of balance. There would be no overall control, because there is no overwhelming support for any one party in London, as is also evidenced by the votes cast in local elections. Last year's May elections in London followed the same pattern—the Tories had 37·7 per cent., Labour 38·7 per cent. and the Liberal Democrats 14·4 per cent. Let us be clear that no party can claim to speak for London.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is making important points about representation in London. Does he agree that the people who voted Labour in London would be outraged and astonished if they knew that only three of the 23 Labour Members representing London would bother to be here for the debate, and to hear the hon. Gentleman's important speech?

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am grateful for that last comment. To be fair, I must add that more Labour Members were here earlier, although what the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has said is on the record. It is surprising, as the Labour party has mounted such a big campaign to persuade people of their commitment to changing London, that, in a debate lasting only three hours, called by the Labour party, so few Labour Members are here.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Where are the Liberals?

Mr. Hughes: I shall come to where the London Liberal Members are in a moment.

The Labour party has come up with a list of proposals, the general thrust of which is correct. My party in its present form believes, and the Liberal party for many years previously believed, in regional government for London. I do not know whether hon. Members have noticed one interesting fact about Labour's document. It

does not cite a single Labour authority in London as an example of good practice. Indeed, it cites only one council, the London borough of Sutton, and that is run by the Liberal Democrats. I have checked and double-checked, and I can find not one Labour borough cited as an example of good local government practice.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman cannot blame Labour for that.

Mr. Hughes: No, I cannot blame Labour for that, because Labour examples of good local government practice are difficult to find.

The London county council was generally well supported and well respected. The Greater London council, which was created by the Tories, was never appreciated as correctly designed. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was correct to say that it was not the right size or shape and did not have the right powers. Like other colleagues, I opposed its abolition, because the Government did not produce an alternative. That is why we also opposed the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way. I should like to press on a little.

We now have the chance of a review. The Government have said that they wish to review local government, but not in London. Everywhere else can contemplate having a different form of local government, but not London. That is the wrong stance and the wrong approach, because Londoners, as much as anyone else, can hold the view that their area needs to be reformed. Opinion polls show that a substantial majority of people are in favour of London having a coherent voice. According to the last poll, 67 per cent. of Londoners said that, in one form or another, London should have a single coherent voice.

The case for a strategic authority is well supported by all objective commentators outside this House. London is almost unique among the world's large cities in not having that co-ordination. Obvious examples of that need are regularly apparent. It is needed, for example, for planning London's transport system, instead of discovering that the land that is needed has already been sold off, so that land for a new railway or tube must, belatedly, be found somewhere else. We have not integrated bus, train, underground and riverbus services or planned such services with interchangeable tickets, and the inability to ensure that docklands is developed for the benefit of all the people of docklands, with democratic accountability, has shown the folly of policies that many have come to regret.

We must decide where to go from here. There are several examples of the weakness of Labour's document. First, it is clearly not yet Labour policy to provide any new strategic London authority with a substantial sum of money. It is no good coming up with a new structure without the money to finance it. Secondly, there is no clear timetable in Labour's document. Labour says that it will produce a new London authority at the same time as introducing devolution in the rest of the country. However, there is a strong argument that London should have its authority earlier than that, before the others. That is what Liberal Democrats believe.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Before Scotland?

Mr. Hughes: No, before any other region in England.

Thirdly, Labour claims that the authority would be electorally accountable and, like me, supports the idea of annual elections. However, Labour fights shy of proportional representation and does not endorse the fundamental method of real accountability, which is to make the people who are elected reflect the views of the electorate.

Fourthly, the Labour document talks about boundaries, but it will be the Labour party that will decide the boundaries, not the people of London.

Labour's fifth proposal is the establishment of a quality commission. This is interesting, and it gives the game away. In 1990, Labour would have given the quality commission

"powers to require a council to invite alternative providers from the public, voluntary or private sector to deliver a customer contract"

if it was not working. However, the new document does not give any such powers. It states:

"In exceptional cases, the commission would have powers to send in a management advisory team to a particular authority if there was widespread public concern about the breakdown in the provision of a particular service."

Although people could complain to the quality commission, the commission would not have the power to do anything about it.

Finally, Labour's document contains some wonderful double-talk about the City of London:

"Within London, we will meet the party's long standing commitment to abolish the local government powers of the Corporation of the City. We will consult with the Corporation and others to ensure the ceremonial duties now carried out by the Lord Mayor continue and that other institutions of value are maintained."

When launching the document, the hon. Member for Dagenham apparently said that the City corporation would remain to elect the lord mayor, although it would not have any power other than to elect the lord major—how ridiculous. Either there should be a Lord Mayor for the whole of London or the lord mayor should remain in the City. I support the lord mayor being elected from the whole metropolis, but the issue should not be fudged as it is in the Labour party's document.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Shersby *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I shall give way just once—to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who rose earlier.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is he saying that he would do away with the City corporation and with the lord mayor who is elected by the City corporation?

Mr. Hughes: That is a perfectly reasonable question, and I shall answer it as I come to the end of my speech.

Mr. Shersby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way briefly on the question of the lord mayor?

Mr. Hughes: Very well.

Mr. Shersby: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that there are two cities in what we know as London—the London borough of the city of Westminster, which has its own lord mayor, and on which body I served for several

[Mr. Shersby]

years, and the City of London? Do the Liberal Democrats propose to abolish the role of the lord mayor of the city of Westminster?

Mr. Hughes: I shall deal with that quickly. Of course the city of Westminster should have its own lord mayor. Indeed, some of us in Southwark, where we have two cathedrals, believe that we should have a lord mayor and be a city ourselves, but that is another argument. I shall come to the wider issue of the lord mayor of London in a moment.

My colleagues and I believe that the principles that should govern local government include starting from the bottom up and ensuring that local government bodies reflect natural communities and that their boundaries reflect the boundaries of those communities. Government should be at the lowest tier possible. We should have parish and community councils in London. They are permitted everywhere else in England but not, for some reason, in our capital city. There should also be a strategic regional tier of government, devolved from Whitehall, with powers that should be exercised Londonwide but by a democratically accountable London body.

Between those tiers—here I believe that I carry with me the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson)—there is a strong view, which runs against the tight conspiracy of the Tory and Labour parties generally, that the present London boroughs are not the right size. At a pensioners' meeting in Bermondsey this morning, I put my view that, if we had a fixed regional authority, we could have much smaller boroughs, as used to be the case. That was met with overwhelming approval, because such boroughs would reflect the size of the local communities, whether in Holborn, Bermondsey, Camberwell or Southwark.

Finally, we must give local government the power to levy its own taxation. It is no good making local government dependent upon Government handouts, which is what Labour does, because, as the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is always telling us in debates about money, Government handouts depend on the economy being able to allow that money to be handed out, and there is no guarantee of that.

We should stop the dog fight. We should stop pretending that any of us had the right to impose our view about the government of London on Londoners. If hon. Members argue here that the people of Vilnius, Latvia, Estonia or Lithuania should have the right to self-determination, why should not the people of London have the same right? Let them decide. Let them decide where their boundaries should be. I read that the mayor of Croydon would like Croydon to be regarded as Surrey, not a Greater London authority. Let the people of Croydon, or Bexley, or Bromley, decide for themselves. Let the people, not the politicians, decide.

If the people want London boroughs of the present size or much smaller boroughs such as the old metropolitan ones, let them decide. I think that they would decide for a smaller metropolitan borough, in which government is much closer to home. If they want parish and community councils, Londoners should, like those in the rest of England, decide. If they want a regional authority, let the people of London decide that, too.

In answer to the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Hendon, South, I and my party believe that the City of London corporation should be abolished. Then the lord mayor of London could be elected to represent the metropolis as it is eventually defined. Londoners should decide that matter as well. If Londoners think that the anomaly of an electorate made up of a few people in the City—business people and people such as myself still with a vote as a legacy of my days as a practitioner at the Bar in the Temple—is suitable to elect the lord mayor of London, so be it. Let all Londoners decide what the electorate should be. I think that they would decide that the present system is anomalous and out of date and ought to change.

I hope that Londoners decide that London government should be based in county hall and that we should not lose county hall to the private sector, which is now the risk. They should also decide the question that the Secretary of State has placed on the agenda in his consultation paper which we await: how should local government be run? Should it be run as now, when councillors elect a local leader, or should we elect for each level of authority a small number of councillors either with an elected mayor or five or six people elected to carry out the tasks of running transport, housing and so on? I favour a move in that direction, but let Londoners decide.

None of the political parties has the majority support of Londoners.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Speak for yourself.

Mr. Hughes: I speak for the hon. Lady too. The Labour party does not have majority support in London.

Ms. Gordon: Come off it.

Mr. Hughes: The Labour party does not have a majority in London; neither do the Tories or the Liberal Democrats.

Any party which imposed its will on London would be unreasonable and would create the same hostility and anomaly, and thus the desire for change, for which we have fought for the past 20 years. Let us have a fair system for electing the type of government that the people want, and less arrogance from the politicians.

5.32 pm

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): After the press conference of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), given while he was floating down the Thames, I was rung up by the press and asked if I thought that London was in crisis. I said that I did not think so; that Lambeth was in crisis, not London. I entirely agree with my hon. Friends that the way in which the hon. Gentleman rubbished our capital city was disgraceful, yet he had the clear support of Labour Members. It was wrong and does no good. It is reasonable to criticise, but not to rubbish London as he did. He spoke for 30 minutes and spent 20 or 25 minutes criticising London, but only about seven or eight minutes suggesting solutions. I shall come to them later.

I was a member for Wandsworth on the Greater London council in its glorious years from 1967 to 1970. They were glorious because the council was Tory-controlled. Even then I thought that the GLC and the Inner London education authority, of which I was chief

whip, contributed little and cost a great deal. Today, we have heard of a possible son of the GLC—a new Greater London authority.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), I was taken aback by the words that the hon. Member for Dagenham chose when he spoke of a lean and hungry animal, or whatever it was. As my hon. Friend said, everything that is lean and hungry gets fattened up. If the hon. Gentleman had said that the new authority would be neutered, muzzled and on a lead, we might have been slightly reassured. I certainly was not reassured when the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) said that the Opposition would have the opportunity to set up this new tier of London government on true socialist principles. I just wish that every Londoner could have heard him. They would have shuddered at his remarks.

It is unfortunate that my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton spoke before me as much of my speech is along the same lines. I agree with him that the London Boroughs Association could become a forum for the discussion of Londonwide matters. I see no reason why that should not happen. There are occasions when such matters should be discussed and, presumably, that is the purpose of the LBA. Rather than build new layers of bureaucracy upwards, that forum seems to be the way forward. Conservative Members are trying to move decision making down to the people. For example, we have introduced local management of schools by governors and parents and have attempted to move decision making downwards on council estates so that residents take over their management. I am sure that that will be the trend for the next decade, rather than building tiers of government upwards at great cost.

As I represent Lambeth, my hon. Friends will understand why I express dismay that a Greater London authority may one day be Labour-controlled. Lambeth is absolutely typical of Labour control. Lambeth is cutting education, although I must tell my hon. Friends that it is not closing youth clubs, as has been reported, but merely youth centres, which will re-open in September.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that the shadow Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), is choosing to have his children educated in Conservative-controlled Westminster rather than in Labour-controlled Lambeth?

Sir William Shelton: I understand that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) lives in Lambeth and, I am afraid, that decision shows his good sense.

Lambeth council is cutting youth provision and social services, just to name a few. The automatic reason that the council gives is that its community charge has been capped. I am trying to find out the truth about that and I have had discussions. So far as I can see, the cuts cannot and should not spring from capping because Lambeth's standard spending assessment for education is £131 million. I understand that Lambeth proposes to spend £18 million less than that. I may be wrong, but that is what I understand, and it is difficult to forget such figures. The council is raiding the education budget for other purposes. In a recent debate, I used the phrase "raiding the education budget" and *Hansard* made it "raising". Lambeth is raiding, not raising, the education budget and capping has been blamed.

So far as I can tell from the papers in my possession, last year's budget in Lambeth was £285 million. This year the budget has been capped to £311 million—a cash rise of £26 million or 9 per cent. If inflation this year is 6 per cent., that represents a rise—admittedly a small one—in real terms. Why is Lambeth making enormous cuts? Every letter it sends out is about the cuts. It is as though it is flying that fact from the flag on the town hall—I would not be surprised if it did. The position is extraordinary, but I suppose it is due to the bad debts that Lambeth must service. If that is the case, I just wish that the Government could be more helpful in allowing us to roll those debts over a longer period, because it is damaging education in my constituency.

Mr. Shersby: Can my hon. Friend tell the House the level of non-collection of the community charge in Lambeth? From an election campaign in which I participated in Lambeth, I understand that a large percentage of people do not pay their community charge and that, before it was introduced, many people did not pay their rates either.

Sir William Shelton: My hon. Friend is right, but I do not know the answer to his question and I doubt whether Lambeth knows it. Many of my constituents have not received even their community charge bills for last year. Last November, some 14,000 first bills had not been sent out. I received a letter from three members of an extremely distraught household that had received eight different paying-in books in the space of 10 days, each with a letter demanding immediate payment. To put it mildly, there has been some confusion in the management there.

May I make a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport? Consultation will take place throughout the country to seek the views of citizens and residents about how local government should be organised and what sort of local government they would like to have. Why should my constituents, Londoners, be denied that? We, too, have our problems. My hon. Friend may be aware of the massive move in Clapham and Streatham to return to the borough of Wandsworth, from which they were wrenched in 1965. I recognise that that is a matter for the local government Boundary Commission, not for the Government. Nevertheless, surely the constituents of all London Members have the right to be consulted about the construction of local government in London. That issue should be given some consideration.

5.43 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): It is interesting to follow the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton). As one of the three Members for Lambeth present, I am sure that he would like me to mention that, today, all three Lambeth Members had a productive meeting with the new leader of Lambeth council and the new chair of education. What Lambeth now needs most is to be taken out of the headlines—*[Interruption.]* It would be helpful if Lambeth were now given a period to settle down under a new leadership and to continue trying to improve its services under difficult circumstances.

The subject of the debate is the government of London and the need for an overall strategic authority. We seek not to re-create the Greater London council, as was firmly stated by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), but to create a new streamlined authority to deal

[Miss Kate Hoey]

with the problems which everyone in London accepts exist. As someone who chose to live and work in London, I am amazed that Conservative Members accuse us of not being proud of living in London. It is precisely because we are proud of living and working in London that we wanted this debate. We want to redress some of the problems that London now faces, many as a direct result of the fact that there is no strategic authority. We initiated this debate because we have pride in and care about London.

It is rather sad that, in his opening remarks, the Minister implied that this debate would stop tourists coming to London. Tourists will come no matter how run-down the city becomes, but we want tourists to leave London with a better impression than they have been getting recently. We want them to be able to see London as I first saw it some 20 years ago when I came to this part of the United Kingdom. They no longer see the city that I saw when I first came—as an artistic and cultural centre. We want London to be prosperous and to contribute to the prosperity of Britain. We want to put right some of the things that have gone wrong.

There will be agreement throughout London that, to achieve those aims, transport must be co-ordinated. Many Conservative Members know that, if they are honest enough to admit it. One has only to speak to those who travel regularly by London Transport to know that there are real problems.

A strategic overview is needed in other areas, too. I shall not discuss housing because other hon. Members will go into more detail on that issue and the problem caused by the increase in homelessness, the shortage of affordable housing and the necessity for people to move around in London. There must be co-ordination to solve those problems and to ensure that affordable housing is built.

I feel strongly about the fact that sporting facilities and sport generally are no longer co-ordinated, so that in future young people will have less opportunity. Who is funding, and who will fund in future, the strategic voluntary initiatives for sport and recreation? The London Borough Grants Committee which was set up to bring together grants for voluntary activities after the Greater London council was abolished, has failed to fund many of the genuine strategic projects, such as the London Playing Fields Association. The Sports Council grant for London, which was initially increased to get over the distribution problems when the GLC was abolished, has been reduced in recent years. The Sports Council expects local authorities to pick up the tab. Naturally, they are unable to do so and many developments are now being stopped.

Who will look after the capital projects in London on a strategic level? A good example exists in Southwark where, at Herne Hill cycle stadium, there were plans for a velodrome. This country is lacking a facility for cycling, but the cost will fall mainly on Southwark, which cannot afford such a strategic facility that will be used by people from throughout London and the country.

Who will replace the ice rink in the London borough of Richmond when it closes in 1992? Who is thinking about such problems now? Ultimately, because there is no overall authority to consider them, each borough is interested only in what happens in its little patch.

In the London borough of Epsom—*[Interruption.]* I count it as near enough to be a London borough. The London Residuary Body is responsible for 70 acres of playing fields, including the Priesthill playing field in Epsom. It has been lying empty and idle since the GLC and ILEA were abolished, and no one is taking overall responsibility for it.

Although many hon. Members are more than happy that Manchester won the bid for the Olympics—hon. Members throughout the House will do our best to ensure that Manchester wins the Olympic bid—London did not even have an equal chance to compete. We did not even begin with "level playing fields", because we had no voice in the matter and no person or group who could sign the contract with the British Olympic Association. I do not think that is acceptable.

Therefore, this debate is about not just the issues that are seen as up front—transport, housing and the overall environment in London—but those issues that together make our capital city a great place where people can feel proud to be. We cannot allow the deterioration to continue. Something must be done, and the Labour party's proposal to recreate a streamlined Greater London authority is the way forward to that.

5.50 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I agreed with the abolition of the Greater London Council because I considered it wasteful, extravagant and politically motivated. It was intensely disliked, and the very image of it is still disliked in my constituency. It had a budget of £1 billion, about £150 to £200 per man, woman and child in London. People talk about the community charge, but the GLC was an imposition on the people of London carried out by the then Labour Government.

The GLC also affected employment. In 1983, the London Chamber of Commerce survey showed that the cost of the GLC on London meant that employment had decreased when otherwise it would have increased. We have heard much about where the money went. It was not a vast amount but my constituents were irritated about where it went. It was spent on the Gay Police Monitoring Unit and Babies Against the Bomb——

Ms. Abbott: The right hon. Gentleman lists the same old things.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The Opposition do not like me talking about this. They do not want it in the papers tomorrow.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. I shall give way to only one Member from each party.

Mr. Livingstone: Although it caused some controversy when we gave a grant to a group to ensure that the police were not discriminating against lesbians and gay men, it seems that our message has got across, because the Metropolitan police are actively taking on board those lessons and trying to eliminate prejudice based on sexual orientation. Surely the right hon. Gentleman welcomes that.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall give some more examples —the English Collective of Prostitutes, the Police

Accountability for Community Enlightenment—presumably, people go around shining torches—the Women's Peace Bus, and a marvellous thing that I do not understand, the See Red Women's Workshop. If anyone can understand that, one would be able to write a PhD thesis backwards.

There were cheers in my constituency when the GLC was abolished. As hon. Members will have expected me to do, I spoke in my constituency this morning and warned of the great spectre rising again like something in Dickens coming to destroy us.

It is said that the new organisation will be lean and hungry at the beginning—my hon. Friend the Member for Steatham (Sir W. Shelton) referred to that—but it will grow. It is to have two powers which it did not have before, involving health and the police. It reminds me of the old Lancashire tale of an illegitimate child born in the 19th century. When the child's mother was asked, "What is your excuse?" she replied, "It is only a little one." But it grew, and the new London organisation will grow in the same way——

Mr. Norris: Will my right hon. Friend say that again?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Do I want to do it again? I shall do it in the second act. Others must read what I have said and then they can take part in the second act with me. I shall say it in less of a Lancashire accent next time.

The only difference with the new organisation will be that, presumably, the Labour party will try to convey the image of Glenda Jackson, not that of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who foisted the GLC on Londoners.

The Government must recognise three problems in London. The first is the state of public transport, which is in uproar. From my constituency 20,000 people a day use the underground. The number of escalators that do not work must be the highest anywhere. Londoners do not like the breakdowns and delays and do not know why the system cannot be made better. Public transport is a sort of strange quango which is responsible to nobody. That will not do, and the Government must act either by privatising the service or putting in more money. For 100 years we have lived on the capital of the Victorians. The system needs new lines and more expenditure and, certainly before the next general election, the Government will have to tackle the problem. If the money is not available, the Government will have to privatise the service and allow people to build other lines.

Yesterday, I watched the beating the retreat with some of my hon. Friends, and I recommend it to any hon. Member. One service that works in this country is that of the armed forces, and I shall not vote for any reduction in those forces because they are probably the best training ground in the country. Instead of putting young people in all the training schemes advocated by the Secretary of State for Employment, they should put them in the armed forces for two or three years and then they would be able to do something afterwards. Is there a spare general to take charge of London Transport? He should be told that he has two years to solve the problem or will go to the scaffold—that would concentrate the mind.

Secondly, there must be a voice for London. Whether that is achieved by bringing together the various boroughs or in some other way, we need a voice for London. Otherwise, hon. Members' views will be affected by those of their constituents. There must be a voice to speak for the whole of London on such issues as the Olympics. Perhaps there should be an elected mayor working with the boroughs. That is a radical suggestion, and I must not become radical, or I shall worry many of my constituents and my wife.

Thirdly, we cannot have local government reorganisation in the rest of the country if we do not have it in London and the metropolitan districts. If that is a plot hinted at by hon. Members from both sides of the House this afternoon, I shall not take part in it. I shall vote against any local government reorganisation until there is reorganisation in London. My constituents in Brent did not want the last local government reorganisation. I mean no disrespect to the Government, under whom it was introduced, but my constituents did not feel that they were linked to that reorganisation. Even the name of my district is anonymous—no one knows where it is and Brent Cross and Brent Cross station are not within it. There is no Brent oilfield, there are no Brent geese, so they call it Brent. During the war, we took away the names of stations because we feared an imminent German invasion. We must have then thought that a Russian invasion was imminent so it was best if no one knew where their district was.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dicks: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) because he has been bobbing up and down and I am worried about his health.

Mr. Dicks: My right hon. Friend mentioned the financing of the London underground. He should be aware that the London underground authorities told the Select Committee on Transport that money was not the problem, and that in 1987, 1988 and 1989 the capital allocation had been underspent. Therefore, something other than money must be causing the problem.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The management must be changed immediately if it cannot use the money.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke about consulting people. There must be consultation about boundaries in London. If people are put in districts where they do not belong, they resent it because it is not right. If we stroke the cat one way, it purrs, and if we stroke it the other way it growls. Good government is when the cat is stroked so that it purrs. I would expect there to be full consultation in London on whether we should return to smaller districts, so that we can determine that people know their own districts.

The Government must do something about those three problems. It is no good merely attacking the Labour party's plans. If we tackle those problems in the correct way, it will help us, not only in London, but in the general election.

5.58 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): After the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) listed the central office bête noires—those grants given out by the GLC—he spoke a great deal of good sense, and I hope that Ministers will heed what he said. He is the only

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Conservative Member to have addressed strategic issues in London. He mentioned transport, the reorganisation of London local government and a voice for London. I do not want to do the right hon. Gentleman any more damage by praising him, but he was the first Conservative Member to elevate the debate and talk about the strategic interests of London as a whole.

I always try to stick by the old saying that in politics we should not get angry: we should get even. Unfortunately, I usually fail, because I am still angry about the abolition of the GLC and how it was done. I am now beginning to get the sweet smell of revenge and getting even because I know that there will be a Labour Government and a restoration of strategic local government in London. That is what Londoners want and it is what they had until 1986—97 years of strategic government in London. We had the Metropolitan Board of Works, superseded by the London county council and then by the Greater London council. The new Greater London Authority will resume the process of the evolution of government in London, and Londoners will greatly welcome that.

Our capital is the only one in the world that does not have city wide local government. We all know why the GLC was abolished—because of the ideological fixation of that second-rate bigot, that authoritarian who inhabited 10 Downing street at the time. I well remember her predecessor saying how appalled he was when he realised that the Conservative party had committed itself to the abolition of the GLC. Londoners did not want that, and at the time not even a majority of Conservative Members in London wanted it. But because it was ordered by "she who must be obeyed" it was pushed through. Despite all the evidence against them, there are still Conservative Members fighting in the Thatcherite bunker, but they are out of time and out of place now—and they will soon be out of office. Londoners are looking forward to that.

Abolition was never popular with London. I remind Conservative Members that in March 1986, on the eve of abolition of the GLC, a Harris opinion poll showed that 81 per cent. of Londoners thought it important to have a single body in the capital to provide and co-ordinate strategic services; 22 per cent. of Londoners approved of abolition; 62 per cent. disapproved; and 59 per cent. believed that matters would be worse after abolition. How right they were.

The 1986 opinion poll findings are remarkably consistent with the latest findings carried out by the *Evening Standard*.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Banks: Two thirds of all Londoners are revealed as believing that London should have an elected authority. I support the suggestion by the right hon. Member for Brent, North of a mayor or a Minister for London, incidentally. Two thirds of Londoners believe that London needs an authoritative voice. The same proportion believe that services in the capital have got worse. So whatever the Government have done to deceive themselves about abolition and its aftermath, Londoners have not been deceived. They understand full well how badly services have deteriorated since abolition, and Tory Members deceive themselves if they think that matters can improve without a strategic body for London.

All informed comment agrees with me on this. Sir Ralf Dahrendorf, in his London Weekend Television London lecture, and Dr. John Rigg, of the Henley Centre for Forecasting, have given their unanimous verdict. They maintain that London is in decline, that it is unplanned and unco-ordinated, that it is dirty, and that it lacks a sense of identity and of civic pride. This last has all but disappeared in London. There is no focal point in the capital, and that is what people complain about so much. LWT's "The London Programme" poll showed that 50 per cent. of Londoners would leave the capital if they could, and only 39 per cent. said that they liked living in London.

We know what the major complaints are. The right hon. Member for Brent, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) mentioned one of them—poor transport. London's roads are breaking up and are riddled with potholes which are a danger to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike. The infrastructure of transport has been allowed to fall into dereliction through lack of investment. Belatedly, the Government are recognising the need to push money into transport. Every scheme that the Minister proposes for investment in public transport will be welcomed by us. We shall of course offer constructive criticism. It is rather late in the day, however, to be taking investment decisions that should have been taken over the past decade, but the Government are trying to rush them through now before a general election.

Certainly there is conflict between central Government and city government in Paris. President Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac are always fighting, but they are fighting over who can bestow the greatest prizes on the capital of France. They take great pride in their capital. London, on the other hand, has become a battlefield between the Government and the Opposition in recent years. We should be able to get together and talk about our capital. The Opposition remain ready to sit down at any time with the Secretary of State to discuss the reorganisation of local government in London; yet, as the right hon. Member for Brent, North correctly said, that is the one aspect that has been ruled out of the new proposals on local government structures.

We are prepared to sit down and discuss the best way to advance our capital city. We have to live in it together, so we should try to improve it together. The rest of the world's capitals organise their local affairs much better than we do. Ministers come out with a great deal of propaganda about how popular London is with overseas visitors, but they should read what is being said by many involved in commerce and industry, who offer many criticisms of transport in London, of planning in London and of the quality of life in London. All these factors are taken into account when business people are deciding whether to locate their financial enterprises here. We are losing out badly to cities such as Frankfurt and Paris because their administrations understand what is needed and do not operate on the ad hoc planning approach adopted by our Government.

The confusion and delay surrounding the route of the channel tunnel to London perhaps sums up best the lack of strategic thinking by the Government. The French have managed to get it right, but we are still dithering. I know that there are many political considerations—how, for instance, to avoid marginal Conservative constituencies—but this is no way to plan the south-east's major transport investment decision.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in the document on London published by the Labour party, it is clear that the first action that his party would take would be to postpone any decision on the channel tunnel rail link for six months?

Mr. Banks: That refers to six months from our election, so as to ensure that decisions that will affect the economic life of this country for decades to come are based on strategic considerations, not narrow party considerations such as those that the Government adopt in respect of the route from Folkestone to London and of the siting of the second channel tunnel station.

Labour's commitment to restoring an elected strategic body for London will be welcomed by a majority of Londoners. I am proud to say that I will be fighting the election in Newham and around London on the policy paper launched by the Leader of the Opposition a couple of weeks ago. The Greater London authority will not be the GLC—why should it be? London's strategic government has evolved in 97 years—that is, until the decision to abolish the GLC. When we restore such a body after the next election, everyone will appreciate that abolition was nothing more than an aberration in the flow of London's history. The great majority of Londoners will welcome the new Greater London authority.

I share the disappointment expressed by the right hon. Member for Brent, North that our document does not mention the possibility of a directly elected London mayor, which is an idea whose time has come. It captures the imagination of Londoners, and I for one will continue to campaign for the proposal to be put to the House for debate—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham seems to be suggesting that I might put my name forward as a candidate for such a post, although I understand that there will be competition from my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). That is fine by me; it is the sort of constructive competition that the next Labour Government will bring to the affairs of London.

I was also delighted to see that our document restates the need to abolish the City of London. It is about time that that anachronistic local government set-up was abolished. It makes no great sense. The Government have simply used the City as an overall strategic authority. It has been given many functions and powers that extend well beyond its limits of one square mile. In any rational examination of the structure of local Government in London, we shall say, as Mr. Gladstone said, that it is about time the City of London was abolished. I hope that we shall retain the ancient and honourable office of Lord Mayor of London, however. To my colleagues who think that I am being rather reactionary, I say that the office of Lord Mayor predates capitalism. It is worth preserving, but it should be preserved in the context of a directly elected Lord Mayor of London.

At about midnight on 31 March 1986 I performed my last duty as the last chairman of the Greater London Council. It predated my removal of all the silver from County Hall and it was the lowering of the GLC standard.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The flag got stuck.

Mr. Banks: Of course it got stuck. Fate did not want to see it lowered; it wanted to preserve the GLC.

The flag was lowered to the strains of Nimrod, from Elgar's Enigma Variations. It was a moving occasion at which I said:

"Tonight is an occasion for happiness tinged with only a little sadness. We are celebrating 97 years of service to London and doing it in a way only the GLC could organise —with music, with colour and with friendship. In that spirit I ask you to salute the Greater London Council and look forward with me in total confidence to its early return."

I look forward to returning to county hall to see the flag raised again to celebrate the first meeting of the Greater London authority. I shall rejoice on that evening, and I suggest that the majority of Londoners will rejoice with me.

6.10 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I am glad to have an opportunity to contribute to the debate, not as a transport expert but as a regular user of British rail and London underground and as a regular recipient of many letters of complaint about what purports to be a public service. For those reasons, I welcome all the more the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and his ministerial team to promote a more responsive and efficient transport system for London.

The initiative comes at a time when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has advanced the pioneering concept of a citizens' charter. I was most interested to hear an apparent endorsement of that by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). Under that charter, the citizen will at last be able to seek some redress when a public service fails to live up to expected standards. In an increasingly consumer-oriented society, passengers, in common with patients and pupils, will no longer put up with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

To improve the situation, two underlying problems must be tackled. They are finance and management. The current record level of public investment is essential, whatever the future structure of the respective systems. The increasing interest of the private sector in ancillary activities is to be welcomed, and I hope that the Government will continue to explore the radical possibilities of franchising rolling stock, track and even the staffing of parts of the system. The prospect of privatisation, even though it is not welcomed by the Opposition, concentrates minds wonderfully in the short term, and in the longer term privatisation will lead to much-needed private capital to provide the system that will be needed in the next century.

In terms of management, it is difficult to avoid a litany of anecdotal evidence heard when passengers gather to swap horror stories. It is all very well to publish plans for reorganising Network SouthEast, but the only issue that matters is whether the passenger perceives that he is receiving a better service. In that context, I shall quote from some letters from the previous chairman of British Rail in response to my representations about constituents' problems.

On reliability, I was told:

"locomotives do not, sadly, have a very good performance record . . . maintenance had, regrettably, fallen into arrears due to an unusually high number of . . . trains operating elsewhere in Network SouthEast requiring tyre damage repairs following the autumn leaf fall."

That explanation is reminiscent of one that I missed this year, when British Rail complained about the wrong type of snow.

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

On overcrowding, I was told that it was

"not an uncommon practice throughout Network SouthEast for some passengers electing to stand for the whole journey, rather than wait for a later service on which they could travel in comfort."

Those letters are as disturbing in tone as they are in content. On top of those complacent platitudes, customers have to tolerate price increases and deplorable standards of cleanliness and comfort. A problem of attitude pervades the whole management system, and unless it is firmly tackled, there is no hope at all of the culture changing. I shall give some other examples.

In December 1990, the director SouthWest wrote an unsolicited letter to me and other hon. Members with constituency interests reminding us that the current timetable would expire in May 1991. Subsequent events showed that he was hoist by his own petard.

After a few months overseas in a military capacity in which such incompetence would not be tolerated, I arrived at Waterloo to catch a specific train and was told that it had been cancelled, not just for that day but for the duration of the very timetable that had been publicised and sent to me. On the same day I was unable to find a member of the platform staff who could explain from the same timetable how trains apparently left Clapham junction before they had arrived from Waterloo.

The next matter is a master stroke. The open-ended return ticket, vital for people with an irregular pattern of train travel, was removed. I asked BR to explain and it said in a letter—if I can find it——

Mr. Tony Banks: I nodded off there.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I shall try to awaken the hon. Gentleman.

British Rail said:

"Network SouthEast loses an estimated £30 million through fraud and ticketless travel every year . . . a major chink in our armour in the past is the misuse of return tickets valid for more than one day. A ticket that is not stamped or collected could be repeatedly used, resulting in significant revenue losses."

It beggars belief that the genuine needs of consumers can so readily be brushed aside. Surely the right question for British Rail to ask was how it could spend £30 million on sophisticated electronic equipment to ensure that it can move towards the elimination of fraud. Hon. Members may think that those are petty examples, but added together, they represent a deep malaise in the transport system.

The Northern line is often referred to as the most embarrassing part of the London underground or, more colloquially, as the misery line. That line has its depot and two stations in my constituency. I await the report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and I hope that the Minister can give us some encouragement about a major and long overdue upgrading of that line. My beleaguered constituents are desperate for some good news.

The Opposition make great play of their concern for public transport, and in that context I have an anecdote which I am sure the hon. Member for Newham, South-West (Mr. Banks) will appreciate. In November, the Northern line celebrated its centenary, and there was much to look back on with pride. It is the oldest electric tube system in the world and had the longest tunnel of its type until the channel tunnel was built. More importantly, that celebration was an opportunity for hon. Members interested in the welfare of their constituents to meet the Northern line managers to discuss the problems of demand exceeding supply, of crime on trains and platforms, and on the issue of safety which rightly concerns the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

What was the response of the local Labour party, flushed with success at winning control of Merton council for the first time? It boycotted the entire proceedings. That is typical of Labour's posturings and its total lack of practical and positive measures.

A familiar expression of the late Airey Neave was: "There's work to be done." I have enormous faith in the ability of my hon. Friend and his colleagues to tackle the problems of public transport, both British Rail and London Underground, by applying the necessary impetus in all meanings of that word.

6.19 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Like the Minister, I am a Londoner. I was born in London, I went to school in London, I was a London councillor, and now I am proud to be a London Member of Parliament. It has been noticeable in the debate how Conservative Members, with the single exception of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), have missed the point. None has talked about the strategic issue. Instead, we have had the same old anecdotes about Labour councils and Labour looniness.

No one pretends that London Labour councils do not have their problems and management difficulties. In Hackney, we have just uncovered a serious housing scandal. I take the opportunity this afternoon to congratulate the new director of housing in Hackney, Bernard Crofton, who has worked hard with a new team to uncover the scandal and turn the situation round. All of us in Hackney concerned with the issue are giving him every support.

I have served as a London Labour Member of Parliament, but I have also served on a Tory-led council. Corruption and mismanagement are not the exclusive preserve of London Labour councils. Despite all that London Labour councils may have done, none has sunk so low as Westminster city council under Lady Shirley Porter, who sold cemeteries for 5p a time. Anyone who wants to hear what people think of Tory councils, their values, morals and commitments, should talk to the relatives of those buried in those cemeteries and saw them peddled to property dealers and overrun by weeds in the pursuit of market values and enterprise. That is what Tory local government amounts to—peddling the dead.

Conservative Members and the Minister have talked about the attractions of London for business, particularly American business. It is true that American businesses wish to come here rather than go to Brussels or Frankfurt, and the main reason for that is language. No Labour Member argues that London is not still an attractive place to live for the rich. The question is what sort of a place London is becoming for the poor and those on middle incomes.

I have lived in London all my life, and I think that one of London's strengths compared with cities such as New York and Washington is that London has always had a

high degree of social and racial integration. In New York and Washington, the rich and the white community live in fear behind stockades. Even today, after 12 years of Tory Government, even after the disturbances that we saw at the beginning of the decade, London is still a remarkably integrated city, where people of all colours and creeds can live side by side.

London Labour authorities, with all their faults, did much during the 1980s to hold London together; to make it a city in which people can walk up and down through many communities in a way which cannot be done in New York or Washington. Whatever people may say about the Labour party in London, inasmuch as we helped to hold London together as an integrated city, we did a service to London. One can see what could have happened to London if one crosses the Atlantic and visits New York and other American cities which are divided by class and race; cities where people cannot leave their neighbourhoods without being in fear of their lives. That is the truth.

That is an issue which Conservative Members do not wish to address. London Conservative Members in their entirety speak from their suburban fastnesses; they speak ridden by suburban bigotry. But the pride and strength of London has always been that it is a city to which people can come from all over the country and from all over the world and in which they can live, work and go to school together, in the knowledge that their children and grandchildren can go as far as they want to go. That is the strength of London. London is a melting pot, and that is something to which the Labour party is committed, as the Conservative party has never been. Conservative Members speak for the suburbs, for bigotry and for people who do not understand what has made London for centuries a magnet for people throughout the world.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: No; others wish to speak, and I want to complete my few remarks.

When we talk about what London Labour-controlled authorities may have done wrong, we should also bear in mind what they did right. They have helped to keep London an integrated city, a city which, despite all its problems, is remarkable for the way in which people can live side by side.

Conservative Members can repeat their central office list of loony grants until they are blue in the face, but it is always the same list; they never produce new examples. But anyone who lives and works in London will talk about the sad decline of London during the past 12 years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) said, cab drivers are not natural Labour voters, but they are the first to say how they regret the lack of investment in London's transport, which has led to London's roads seizing up.

Nobody who knows London and who uses London transport—unlike Conservative Members can have failed to notice how London has declined into a shabbier, seedier and sadder place in the past decade. As a proud Londoner, I think that that is very sad indeed. No central office propaganda, no sneers at the London Labour party, can deny the evidence of people's own eyes. Under a Conservative Government, London has suffered from systematic neglect.

Mr. Bowis: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: I must complete my remarks, because the Front-Bench spokesmen wish to speak.

It is easy—it is not a temptation which Conservative Members find easy to resist—to sneer at what London local authorities may have done wrong in the past. But I want to take this opportunity to talk about what they have done right in the past. I think it was the Minister who asked what anybody who came into the debate this afternoon might think. Anyone who came into the debate this afternoon and looked at London Conservative Members would see that, without exception, they are middle-aged, grey-faced and grey-suited men. London Labour Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] —three quarters of London Labour Members were here at the beginning of the debate—represent London in all its variety.

The London Labour party may have its faults, but that is because London has its faults. The London Labour party may be a difficult and turbulent party, but since mediaeval times, London has been a difficult and turbulent city. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Edmonton may laugh, but we were at school together. I am a grammar school girl made good and he is a grammar school boy gone to the bad——

Mr. Portillo: That is a gross calumny on my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn). I represent Enfield.

Ms. Abbott: But we are both in a funny way an example of what can happen to the children of people who come to London from far away.

In this debate, I have risen to be a voice from beyond the suburbs, beyond people carping about their rates, beyond people complaining about these blacks and these women, and to talk for the spirit of London. Since mediaeval times, it has been a dangerous, dirty and difficult city, but, above all, it has been a city of contrasts; a city to which people come from all over the world to live side by side.

If there is one crime that Conservative Members have committed, it is not their sad neglect of the city or the public sector, but the fact that they insist on speaking up for parochialism and for the inward-looking. They have never caught the spirit of this great city. For all its faults, the London Labour party has always done that. That is why any strategic authority will have a Labour majority. That is why the London Labour party still, in its variety and with its energy, speaks for London, and we will speak for London still.

6.29 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I am glad to have been in the Chamber for the past 10 minutes to listen to the moving speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). She is a black woman who was born in London and can speak movingly about our capital city. I loathed the patronising interruptions and mockery of Conservative Members during her speech.

Apart from that behaviour, this has been a good debate, but, as people say about football matches, it has been a debate of two halves. Opposition Members have made thoughtful contributions, but, with the significant exception of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson)—who has left the Chamber in case I embarrass

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

him—there have not been many thoughtful contributions from the Conservative Benches. They have consisted of the usual old rigmarole of slagging off the Labour party in London.

In his opening speech, the Minister seemed like Dr. Pangloss himself. "All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds" was his message. The only cloud on the horizon in London was the London Labour party, which was causing all the trouble. The Government claim that what the Labour party is saying in the motion could damage London's image abroad. All that we are doing is telling the truth about what is happening in London. Nothing could do more harm to London than a recitation of the facts. No words of mine could compare with the bad impression that foreign visitors may get when they come here occasionally, or the bad impression that Londoners get every day from the evidence of their own eyes: the unswept streets and the uncollected rubbish. [HON. MEMBERS: "In Labour authorities."] It is not Labour authorities.

Mr. Portillo: Westminster is fine.

Mr. Dobson: I invite the Minister to walk from my constituency in Camden into the neighbouring part of Westminster—provided that the council has not been warned in advance so that it can fix it—and tell me, judging by the state of the streets, which borough he is in. Most of the time he would not be able to tell the difference. It is not the fault of Labour councils that countless homeless people are huddled in shop doorways and public parks. It is not the fault of Labour councils that beggars collect outside the British museum and Buckingham palace. It is not the fault of Labour councils that sick people have to queue for health care in hospital out-patient departments.

When the Labour party speaks out on these matters, it is giving voice to the views of Londoners. We must say it, because the London Tories dare not tell the truth. They apparently will not accept the evidence of their eyes and ears. They will not speak up for London. Most Londoners want to live in this great city. They are proud to be Londoners. Most of them were born and grew up here. Moved here because they wanted to do so. There are attractions to living in a big city. The buzz and bustle, the excitement and, to some extent, the danger of big-city living attract people. Most people in London want to stay, or would want to provided that they were guaranteed a better quality of life.

The demands of Londoners are not outrageous. They want a decent home that they can afford; they want to feel safe when they walk the streets at night, and to sleep safe in their beds. They want good-quality health care for themselves and their families. They want good schools for their children. They want secure jobs with decent pay. They want to travel in clean, cheap, punctual transport. Nearly 50 per cent. of Londoners say that they would like to leave London, not because they are tired of London, but because they are tired of the circumstances in which they are expected to live and because basic services are not available.

In this great city last year, 37,000 of our fellow citizens were officially accepted as homeless.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea) *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I shall not give way, because I do not have time.

In London, 17,000 owner-occupiers had their houses repossessed because they could not afford to make their mortgage repayments. Tonight, 33,000 of our fellow citizens are living in bed-and-breakfast or hostel accommodation. If Conservative Members want to carry the country with them when they talk about improving people's health, they will have to improve the health of the people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

In a report about my constituency, doctors mildly say:

"It is difficult to maintain hygiene while washing, eating and sleeping in one overcrowded room."

Indeed it is. They talk of high levels of gastroenteritis, skin disorders and chest infections. They say that the rates of accidents involving children are high, owing to the combination of a lack of space and hazards, such as kettles, on the floor of the room. The report is not about a third-world city such as Calcutta. It is about London now, and the circumstances in which our fellow citizens are expected to live.

Last year, in this city of 7 million people, only 363 council houses were started. None of them was in Camden, Islington, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham or Lambeth. Wandsworth—the Tories' favourite place—went literally one better: it started one council house. In 1978, the year before the Government took office, 13,000 council houses were started for people who needed homes. That means that last year only one council house was started for every 36 that were started in 1978.

One reason for that is the cost of land, which is high because it has been driven up by property speculation. Property speculators are driving out our local communities. To convince Conservative Members, I can do no better than to quote what Winston Churchill said in 1910 about property speculators—it was right then, and it is right now:

"The profits of property speculators rise in direct proportion to the damage they do to the rest of the community."

They make their money by pushing up rents. They drive up industrial and commercial rents and company costs.

One of the reasons for rising unemployment in London is that companies cannot afford to pay the rents that property speculators demand. Companies close or leave London, and jobs are lost. Since the Government took office, 400,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in London. People tend to forget that London used to be the major manufacturing city in Britain. Banks and insurance companies should remember that when they decide on their investment policies. They achieved quicker and cheaper returns by investing in property speculation than by investing in industrial or commercial activity. They have done a vast amount of damage.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, in the past year the number of people unemployed in London has soared from 201,000 to 309,000—even according to the Government's doctored figures. There are 26 out-of-work people for every vacancy. Some of the jobs have been lost in the health service. When the Government took office, there were 140,000 people working full time in the health service in London. The figure is now down to 120,000.

When the number of jobs was decreasing, the Government said that it would not affect patients, but it

has. During that period, the hospital waiting lists have increased by a third. Now, more than 134,000 Londoners are waiting for hospital treatment. If it was not staff cuts that led to those waiting lists, it must have been the bed cuts. The number of acute hospital beds has gone down by a third, from 31,000 to 21,000. Fewer staff, fewer beds, longer waiting lists: it is a simple matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has been so effective in exposing the shortcomings of the Government's transport policies that they have made a U-turn—or, at least, they are trying to convince people that they have. We have heard about the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, and the good old *Evening Standard*—not usually a Labour paper—says:

"Tube fares set for huge rises".

That is because the Government will not provide the money to invest in London Regional Transport.

In their amendment, all that the Government can say about transport is that the transport system is

"as extensive as any in Europe".

So what? It always was. With equal accuracy they could have said that it is the most expensive, most unreliable, slowest and dirtiest in Europe. The people of London know that, even if Conservative Members deny it.

It is not a Labour party myth that people in London are concerned about the education that their children are receiving. Apart from the many mad testing schemes that take up teachers' time—and even the Tories seem to be abandoning them—the Tories are saying that the answer is to go back to basics. I agree with that. There are many basics we need but do not have at present. We need a qualified teacher for every class. That is pretty basic. We need a textbook for every child, a classroom that does not let in the rain, and a nutritious school dinner for every child that needs one. Those are pretty basic needs, too. Incidentally, I remind Conservative Members that, when the present Prime Minister was a Minister at the Department of Social Security, he deprived 35,000 of the poorest children in London of the right to a free school meal. We need one other basic change. We want a Cabinet with members who send their children to the schools that they say are good enough for the children of their constituents.

The Tories keep moaning about crime and, with good reason, crime concerns the people of London. In the 1974 election the present Prime Minister stood in St. Pancras, North, which is now part of my constituency. At that time, he said that the figure for violent crime was too high. Since then it has doubled, and doubled again. There are four violent crimes now for every one in 1974, when he said that there were too many. Since the Government took office, the number of sexual offences in London has doubled, robbery has trebled and criminal damage has trebled. I have been checking and it appears that the only contribution that the Prime Minister made to solving that problem when he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury and then Chancellor of the Exchequer was to refuse to find the funds that the Metropolitan police thought were necessary to combat rising crime in London.

The problems for London in the future are enormous. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) said so movingly, London is a troublesome place. It has always been a troublesome place. It is crowded and difficult. There are no instant solutions to the problems, and the Labour party does not offer instant solutions to intractable problems. It is nothing to do with money, but, unlike the Government, who perform a stunt every Tuesday and Thursday and have to go back on the stunt the following Tuesday and Thursday, we believe that it is better to think out the answers to problems before suggesting them.

We believe that there are three ways forward for the future of London. The Labour party has national policies with practical answers to practical problems on jobs, training, policing, housing, education, health, transport and crime. We know in advance that they will not all work; nobody's policies have all worked. However, we have to try to work our way through and improve the quality of life in London.

We have learnt lessons, including some from the performance of London Labour councils. We accept some responsibility for what has been going on. We have learnt that it is no good for the Government to say, "This is going to happen, this is a change in the law and here is the money," and then think that the service has automatically been delivered. We know from experience that that is not so. That is why we are proposing a quality commission with powers to check the costing and quality of services provided by local government. In the light of the failure of the social services inspectorate in Staffordshire, this Government, above all, should remember that we want top quality inspectorates looking at all the services.

The issue that has received most attention, at least from Opposition Members, is that we believe that there should be an elected strategic authority for London. Most of the work will always have to be done by the lower tier authorities. The GLC used to perform some of the duties that would be better done by the lower tiers, and that is why I always believed that it should be substantially changed. There are Londonwide problems requiring a Londonwide perspective from an elected body. Some jobs simply cannot be done by 32 or more boroughs. Planning, transport and other strategic issues need to be dealt with by a Londonwide authority.

What we want, and what Londoners have made clear in every poll about London that they want, is an elected voice for London. They want government of the people of London, by the people of London, for the people of London. That is what the people of Birmingham, Glasgow and Sheffield get. They elect councils with civic pride to do something about their great cities. That is what we are promising the people of London. We know that they want it, and the Tories are scared stiff of those alternatives.

6.45 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I apologise to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for missing his opening speech. I shall read the record. However, I have been able to listen to the excellent contributions from my hon. Friends and from other hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) talked about homelessness. I agree that it is a disgrace that people should wish to sleep and have to sleep in the streets of the capital. Members on both sides of the House share that view. That is why the Department of the Environment has initiated a major programme of £180 million over two years. It is also why, over the past two years, the Department of Health has instituted a major programme of housing, both temporary and permanent,

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

for the mentally ill—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may barrack me, but I am trying to make a serious point with which both sides of the House would agree.

Several points were raised on the structure of government in London. There were powerful speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton), for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes). They all spoke out strongly for London. Although I intend to address most of my remarks to transport, I shall ensure that their remarks are conveyed to my colleagues at the Department of the Environment.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) is in her place. In a recent interview as a shadow transport Minister she perhaps let the cat out of the bag. She was asked whether the new authority for London could be a taxing authority. Quite fairly and frankly, she admitted that it could be.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Will the Minister tell my constituents, whose homes and lives are blighted by the shambles over the channel tunnel rail link, when he will decide on the options for that link and whether he will rule out an overland route through south London that would blight for ever an inner city area that is hoping to regenerate? When will he put the people of Peckham out of their misery and decide on an alternative route?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady did not deal with my point that the new authority could be a taxing authority. That is the implication. However, the Government have just received from British Rail its preferred routes and will come to a decision as quickly as possible. We will then publish the preferred route and all the detailed justifications for the selection. If elected to office, the Labour party proposes to take six months to come to a decision. We are committed to reaching a decision as quickly and sensibly as possible.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Minister said that I gave an honest answer that such an authority could be a taxing authority. He knows perfectly well that in the Labour party's published document it does not state that it will be a taxing authority. It will take over the precepts that are currently given to the quangos that the Government were forced to set up when they removed the GLC. It is unfair of the Minister to suggest that I have made any mistake or that my comments differ in any way from the views of my party.

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Lady does not differ from her party in any way, which is why we note her comments as shadow transport Minister about the taxing implications of the new body.

As the Minister for Public Transport, I emphasise that we all agree—including the spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes)—that for London the transport infrastructure is vital. We want a modern, clean, reliable and safe infrastructure for the underground, for the buses, for Network SouthEast——

Mr. Gould: Is this how it is to be done?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Member for Dagenham waves the *Evening Standard*. Let me disabuse him: there is absolutely no truth in the *Evening Standard*'s article, so if I were him, I should fold it up and put it down.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report was published today, after six months, detailed study of the underground. We welcome the report, as it is well written and serious. It reflects the fact that the Victorian and Edwardian structure of the railway has needed, and still needs, substantial maintenance. Demand on London Underground has risen dramatically in the previous five or six years, as my hon. Friends who represent London constituencies know. Demand has increased by 50 per cent., so extra capacity is needed.

The Government have approved two new underground railway lines and are planning a third. We have a 15-year programme involving the Jubilee line, which will cost over £1 billion, the east-west crossrail and the safeguarding of the Chelsea-Hackney route. That is a creditable programme for the extension of the London underground, which will cost more than £3 billion. *[Interruption.]* Whereas we are planning to support a £3 billion investment programme for London Underground over the next three years—which is double the investment programme of the previous three years—the Opposition will be unable to improve on that programme, because the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury will not permit any revenue commitments. Their preference for revenue subsidy to reduce the fares on Network SouthEast and on the underground is a non-runner.

As for the capital programme, the Opposition's suggestion is to borrow in the private capital markets. I can tell the shadow Transport Minister that London Underground will not be able to borrow in the private capital markets without a guarantee from Her Majesty's Government—it is not possible. That is part of public sector borrowing and they would end up paying more than the Government pay through the national loans fund. Such a proposal would not run.

In his speech, which I am sorry that I missed, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) said that a comparison of investment by the GLC in the London underground in 1984-85 of £165 million—that is at today's prices—with that for 1990-91 of £442 million showed an increase of two and a half times. However, he argued that the GLC would have liked to spend more but could not. The weakness in that argument—and I have the figures here—is that in the last three years of the GLC's existence, the revenue subsidy was £510 million, but capital investment was £394 million—only 45 per cent. of the total resources available went on investment.

Mr. Livingstone *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: Let me finish the point.

In the past three years, when the Government have had direct control of London Underground, the figures have been reversed. There were £171 million of revenue subsidy and £843 million of investment: 85 per cent. of the resources went on investment. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the Minister confirm that the reason why the figures are different is that the GLC had complete control of the revenue figure to set as it wished, but the capital figure was subject to central Government control? It was negotiated between GLC officials and

Department of Transport officials, and it reflected the Government's priorities. Had the Government allowed us to spend what we wished, we would have built the Jubilee extension to the docklands out of revenue. It would now have been operating with not £1 of debt on public spending.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman's argument is bogus. The resources available to the GLC were part of the public sector. The Labour party made the deliberate decision to emphasise revenue subsidy, not investment. The Government have reversed that emphasis, much to the benefit of Londoners.

I shall deal with buses and then with the railways before I conclude. The Conservative party is the party with positive ideas for the future of London buses. We favour the deregulation of London bus services and the privatisation of London Buses Ltd. The management of London Buses want the services to be privatised. We favour deregulation because we want more bus services provided in Greater London—services at different times of the day and of the week.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): That will not happen.

Mr. Freeman: How does the hon. Gentleman know? If the services are deregulated, nobody will destroy the traditional red double-decker London buses. They will remain, but instead of London Regional Transport deciding centrally where the bus routes will run, we shall give the market a chance to decide—and that means the passengers in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: I shall give way in a moment, but let me finish this point.

We believe that by deregulating the market we shall increase the patronage of London buses and that, therefore, there will be less congestion on London's roads. The Conservative party has taken the initiative with the red routes. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said that that initiative had been so successful that traffic speeds were giving cause for concern. Our policies—not only the red routes and the improvement of Network SouthEast and of London roads, but the deregulation of bus services—are the best recipe for relieving congestion in Greater London.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, especially as I was in a Select Committee for some of the debate. He challenged me when I made a sedentary intervention. Will he tell Londoners and the House how full deregulation, which is what the Government's paper recommends, is compatible with a service that provides buses early on a Sunday morning, for example, or at the end of routes which, at the moment, are funded from the surplus in the central area of a route? How will full deregulation under his proposals provide the scale of service that Londoners want?

Mr. Freeman: In the same way that bus services in the provinces are provided where the social routes in the provinces are subsidised. My local county council subsidises bus routes, and that applies to the councils in the constituencies of all my hon. Friends. That will continue. The authority responsible for bus transportation in London will continue to sponsor socially necessary bus routes and services. *[Interruption.]* I have already answered the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. Perhaps he did not hear the first time so, for the sake of clarity, I shall tell him again why the *Evening Standard* is wrong.

We accept that substantial increases in investment in London underground are needed. We have provided for £3 billion of investment over the next three years, which is an increase of 100 per cent. There is no question of huge fare rises for the passengers of London Underground. That is neither acceptable nor appropriate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) mentioned Network SouthEast. I am grateful for his support of the principle of privatisation which the Government, when re-elected, will introduce in the next Parliament. Privatisation has three advantages. First, investment constraints are removed. In the private sector, British Rail would be able to borrow what it deemed sensible. The employees of British Rail—140,000 of them—will be able to own shares directly in British Rail. Indeed, their pay will be more directly related to their performance. Thirdly, where appropriate—it is not appropriate for Network SouthEast—I hope that there will be greater competition and therefore a greater improvement in the quality of services.

There are key differences between the approaches of the Opposition and of the Government to transport planning in London. It needs to be properly co-ordinated. I am the Minister responsible for co-ordinating public transportation in London, and it is done well and satisfactorily. The main differences between the Labour party and the Government are, first, that the Labour party believes in centralised planning and centralised control while we believe, as my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) said, in a decentralised system of planning where the passenger, not a bureaucrat or a politician, makes the decision.

Secondly, we do not believe in politicians deciding on new rail or underground lines. It is for the operators to make the decision and to bring it to the Government for funding. We have done that. Thirdly, the Labour party believes in revenue subsidy while we believe that investment is the key. Lastly, the Opposition can make no further commitment to provide funding to increase the expenditure to which the Government are committed. We have a major programme for London involving £4 billion over the next three years for Network SouthEast and London Underground. The Government will continue in office and bring the benefits of that programme to full fruit for Londoners.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 300.

Division No. 156] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Beckett, Margaret
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Allen, Graham	Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Anderson, Donald	Benton, Joseph
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Bermingham, Gerald
Armstrong, Hilary	Blair, Tony
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Boateng, Paul
Ashton, Joe	Boyes, Roland
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bradley, Keith
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Barron, Kevin	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Battle, John	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*

Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael

Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown, and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 250, Noes 26.

Division No. 157] **[7.16 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Begga, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carr, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Fearn, Ronald
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Martlew, Eric
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Trimble, David
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House deplores the habit of the Labour Party to run down London in a way which, if taken seriously, would damage its image abroad, deter foreign investors and bring glee to London's competitor cities overeas; emphasises that London is one of the world's finest cities with cultural and business attractions which have few rivals, a transport system as extensive as any in Europe and international hub airports which are the envy of others; welcomes the decision of the Government to relieve London of the unnecessary and highly wasteful Greater London Council; deplores Labour's plans to establish a still more wasteful London-wide body with powers to control the police which even the Greater London Council did not have; welcomes the Government's enmormous investment programme in public transport and in infrastructure in Docklands; and salutes the Government's achievements of the last 12 years which have raised Britain's reputation abroad and with it that of her capital city.

Training and the Unemployed

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister and his right hon. Friends.

7.28 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government for the recession which is affecting every part of Britain and every sector of industry, with serious long-term consequences for Britain's future; notes with dismay that at a time of rising unemployment, the Government is cutting support for the unemployed; and calls upon it to reverse the cuts in training provision and provide additional employment measures for the unemployed without delay.

Our case tonight is clear: this recession is the avoidable recession, the consequence not of events outside Government control but of errors of economic incompetence. It is now cruelly affecting the lives of millions of our citizens, and without urgent Government action—first, on interest rates, secondly, on training and, thirdly, on help for the unemployed—there will be lasting and long-term damage to the future of this country.

In the past six months alone—the first six months of the Prime Minister's premiership—almost 500,000 people have been added to the dole queue. Ministers used to say that unemployment was not rising in the north, in Scotland, in the midlands and in Wales—just in the south. Last month shattered that illusion, when unemployment rose most sharply in the midlands, and the north and Scotland suffered their worst rise of the recession.

They used to clutch at the straw that unemployment was at least still below the European Community average. Now, according to the OECD, it is above it, and according to the National Institute of Economic and Social Research last week, by the end of 1991 only Spain, Ireland and what was East Germany will have higher unemployment rates than Britain.

This week Cambridge Econometrics and the London Business School forecast that unemployment will not only rise throughout the rest of this year but will continue to rise in 1992. Those bodies say that unemployment may rise to almost 3 million. Is any Minister prepared to contradict them?

Ministers used to take comfort from the idea that the recession was service-based, affecting white collar professionals. Now we know that even that was a false hope. Manufacturing output this year will fall by about 6 per cent., and investment by 10 per cent. According to the evidence given by the Confederation of British Industry to the Select Committee on Employment, about 90,000 to 100,000 manufacturing jobs have gone in the first few months of this year alone. Our analysis of vacancies at job centres shows engineering vacancies falling by 60 per cent. and technicians' vacancies by 70 per cent.

Worse still, it is clear that, over the period 1979 to 1991, we start from a lower base than other countries. By the end of 1991, manufacturing will have grown more slowly than in any other OECD country. It has risen by 62 per cent. in Japan, by 37 per cent. in the United States, by 27 per cent. in Germany but by only 6 per cent. in Britain. Manufacturing investment will have grown more slowly in Britain than in any other country except Greece.

The true distinctive feature of the recession is not that it is a sudden, service-based, white-collar recession, but that it is now affecting north and south, services and manufacturing, white-collar and manual jobs. No region, no sector, no occupation is now immune.

Let us be clear that, however the recession began, the reality today is that the companies going to the wall, the employees being made redundant, are those that took the tough decisions in the early 1980s, and reformed and changed as Ministers urged them to. These are the casualties not of wrong decisions taken by lazy managers or obstinate employees but of wrong decisions taken by Ministers, and it is Ministers who should now shoulder the responsibility.

In this recession, we are losing companies that we cannot afford to lose and skills that we desperately need to keep. Our concern lies not just in the present fears of the hundreds of thousands of people not under the threat of unemployment, and not just in the present difficulties of industry and home owners suffering under high interest rates. Our concern is that, without action now, we shall lose, and lose permanently, capacity and skills that we require to compete successfully in the future.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): The hon. Gentleman is talking with great sincerity about unemployment. Has he had a chance to study the pamphlet produced by the Fabian Society, which shows that a national minimum wage policy would cost about 800,000 jobs? Does he agree with that estimate, and even if he does not, does he support his party's policy to introduce a national minimum wage?

Mr. Blair: I support that policy absolutely. The hon. Gentleman has been badly briefed by his researchers. The Fabian pamphlet that Ministers cite against a minimum wage was actually written in support of it. The job estimates are absolute nonsense. We know, as does the rest of the country, that Conservative Members are raising the issue only because they dare not talk about the unemployment that they are creating, day in and day out.

The other day, in an interview on "Frost on Sunday" on TV-am, the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave the Government's response to the recession:

"These are just vague stirrings at the moment, but the signs are there . . . I know that when one talks to business men —I talk to business men all the time, and listen very carefully to what they're saying—lots of them say, 'We can't see it', but of course, they can't see round the corner. That is what the economist has to do, what the Treasury has to do, and what we have seen"

David Frost then asked the Chancellor:

"But the vague stirring? You're saying you've seen vague stirring?"

The Chancellor replied:

"Faint stirrings, yes."

Given three years of high interest rates and the number of small businesses going bankrupt—bankruptcy rates went up by 97 per cent. in the south this year, by 115 per cent. in the midlands, by 159 per cent. in Wales and by 261 per cent. in East Anglia—"faint stirrings" are a pretty poor record for any Government after 12 years.

Ministers told us that there would be no recession when there was a recession; they told us that it would be shallow when it was deep. Now, when the evidence of their own incompetence is piled deep around them, and when we have the worst recession in the western world, they still try to pretend that the problem does not exist, because they do not have a clue how to solve it.

Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer not understand that, as he and his colleagues looked round the corner—as

[Mr. Blair]

he puts it—two years ago and told people that there was an economic miracle, and as people and businesses planned, borrowed and organised on that basis, those people and businesses are now entitled to experience feelings of betrayal, because, instead of a miracle, they have got a recession? Does the Secretary of State for Employment not understand the feelings of the unemployed, and their anger, not only about the fact of unemployment but about the fact that, at a time of fast rising unemployment—we have the fastest rising unemployment anywhere in the western world—the Government are cutting the budget for training the unemployed?

When unemployment was last at 2 million, in December 1988, the budget for special employment measures was £1·5 billion in real terms. Today it is £800 million. Then, unemployment was falling; now, it is rising. Are not the training and enterprise councils, which have been landed with the responsibility for training the unemployed without the power or funds to do it properly, entitled to experience a sense of betrayal as well?

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): May I interrupt the hon. Gentleman in the full flight of his rhetoric and return him to reality? How does he explain the fact that the amount spent on training in real terms—not in cash terms—is two and a half times higher than it was in 1979? That is a fact, and he cannot deny it. In the midst of all his waffle and rhetoric, he might compare the Government's record with that of their Labour predecessors.

Mr. Blair: As the hon. Gentleman wishes to talk about reality, are we not entitled to point to the reality of what is happening to training and enterprise councils? The hon. Gentleman does not need to take our word for it——

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman asked about the reality of TECs——

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that I asked about the reality of training and enterprise councils.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am quite prepared to listen to the hon. Gentleman's point of order when the House will allow me to hear it, as it must.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is rather at fault. He said that I had asked him about TECs. Should he not have another chance to answer the question that I put to him? He said that training was underfunded, yet we are spending two and a half times as much as was spent when the Labour party was in office. That is the question that he should answer.

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman's case——

Mr. Nicholls: Just answer it.

Mr. Blair: If the hon. Gentleman disputes that TECs are underfunded, he does not have to take my word for it but the word of the TECs themselves. One thing that one can say about the Government's case is that at least they have been clear, if not brazen, over the past six months. We have raised the question of the underfunding of training and the cuts in the training of the unemployed——

Mr. Nicholls: But you oppose TECs.

Mr. Blair: For six months, the Government have consistently denied that there is any such underfunding—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) listened, he might learn something. For six months——

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman answer my question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself. That is not the way in which we conduct ourselves. Doubtless other hon. Members will seek the opportunity to make alternative arguments.

Mr. Blair: If the hon. Gentleman were to read the Government's proposals on preventive health care, he might find something that would help him.

Let us return to the training and enterprise councils and the cuts that have been made, and consider what the Government have been saying in the past few months. Many hon. Members of all parties will remember that, when the Opposition have raised the issue of cuts in training, the Government have consistently denied that any such cuts are being made. On 26 February, the Secretary of State said that Opposition complaints about funding were entirely unjustified. The Under-Secretary of State for Employment has said that the TECs are contracted to deliver the guarantee, funded accordingly, and will deliver the guarantee. The Secretary of State has also said that he has put in place the widest and most comprehensive range of assistance to help the unemployed. That is what the Government have been saying, but we are now able——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Blair: No, I should like to finish my point.

We have conducted the first nationwide survey of training and enterprise councils and the problems that they have discovered, and we now have the evidence to put before the Government. This comes not from the Opposition, but from the training and enterprise councils which the Government themselves established. The 40 or so training and enterprise councils that replied to the survey report an average cut in training places of 25 per cent. That means that, in those TECs alone, 20,000 training places have been cut, and that 300,000 training weeks have been lost.

However, worse and more significant than anything else, is the reason that has been given. It is not the case, as the Government have said, that those TECs are merely switching training providers and reallocating contracts to different people. They have not said that there is any lack of demand for training places. Indeed, they have not said any of the things that the Government have been saying. The evidence has been clear. The north Nottinghamshire training and enterprise council has stated:

"there could be some difficulty in meeting the guarantee in North Notts given current funding levels for both ourselves and Employment Service."

The Kent training and enterprise council, which covers the Secretary of State's constituency, has stated:

"The provision for ET this year is 30 per cent. less than 1990/1991. The budget amounts to £5·338 million but as we have carried over a large number of trainees into this financial year, our training providers are having to reduce numbers at a time when demand is increasing."

The Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council has stated:

"Out of a total of 12 local (adult training) contracts, four have not been renewed. The rationale for these decisions is relatively simple, in that we have to strike a balance between the needs of the trainees; increasing the quality of training; and maintaining viable providers on a budget reduced in real terms by about 50 per cent."

That is what has been happening to the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does the hon. Gentleman recollect that, not very long ago, he stated in answer to an intervention from myself that a future Labour Government would increase spending on training as a matter of priority? Did the hon. Gentleman get the chance to listen to his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) speaking on the "On the Record" programme on 19 May, when she clearly reiterated that a future Labour Government's only spending priorities would be pensions and child benefit? Who is right—the hon. Gentleman or the hon. Member for Derby, South?

Mr. Blair: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the Budget submissions that were produced by the Labour party in the run-up to the Budget, he will see that we showed exactly how the Government could have returned the training and enterprise councils to their previous funding level. The hon. Gentleman is talking absolute nonsense.

I should like to quote to him from a letter from the north Nottinghamshire training and enterprise council to one of its local training providers. The House should recall that the Government have consistently said that no training providers are going under as a result of Government cuts in funding, but this is what that TEC has said:

"As explained by both Steven and Pearl on recent visits, the overall Adult Training budget for the North Nottinghamshire TEC has been reduced by about 30 per cent. Although this is clearly a strange situation to be in at a time of rapidly rising unemployment, it is nonetheless the case . . . We realise that our decision has resulted in some unpleasant decisions . . . to make regarding your staff. I am sincerely sorry that they will be redundant. I wish there was something that I could do to prevent it, but I am afraid that our hands are tied."

That is what is actually happening.

Another minute has found its way into our posession. It is a letter from the Department of Employment to a training provider in London—to the Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): What is funny about that? Why is the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) laughing?

Mr. Blair: I must advise the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) that that organisation was given approved organisation training status by the Government, so it is not very sensible for him to laugh.

The Department of Employment stated:

"After very careful consideration, I regret that we will not be seeking to renew our contract with you for the coming year. As you are aware, funding levels have been drastically reduced and it has just not been possible to continue to fund the existing network of providers."

I repeat that that came from the Department of Employment.

Finally, a minute of a meeting on 2 May between the permanent secretary to the Department of Employment and the training and enterprise councils states:

"In both London and Sheffield the forecast for the period October 90 to October 91 was for a 50 per cent. rise in the levels of unemployment. Any arguments that the Treasury therefore had for a reduction in funding were now completely eroded and in fact there was a demonstrable justification for further funds."

In the light of those minutes and letters from the training and enterprise councils, and in view of everything that has been said, are we not entitled to an explanation from the Secretary of State? How does he justify at Employment questions, in debates, on radio and on television steadfastly denying that there is any problem with funding when there is now clear first-hand evidence of a funding reduction that is causing hardship and putting the Government's training guarantees at risk?

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

There is not only a problem with the training and enterprise councils. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) recently raised the question of skill centres with the Secretary of State. He was told that he was making up nonsense about skill centres closing and about there being problems following their privatisation. Yesterday, however, my office received a letter from someone who used to be employed by the skill centres, which stated:

"Until last May, myself and hundreds of colleagues were civil servants employed by the Department of Employment and working in the Skill centres. I had worked in this field for 14 years and felt quite committed to retraining of the unemployed. I felt then, as I feel now, that training belongs in the public sector and responsibility for adult training and its funding should be taken by the Government.

However, the decision was taken that we should be privatised, and Astra Training Services was born . . . recently, due in the main to the poor funding of Employment Training and the inability of the private sector to play their part (due I am sure to financial problems) Astra is now making such a large loss that they are needing to shed more staff."

That is the reality of what is happening. Are we not at least entitled to an admission from the Government that that is what is happening?

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm the following figures? Does he accept that there are now 350,000 Government training places and that, when the Government came to power in 1979, there were only 6,000? Does that increase record a cut or is it, as I think, a record of the Government's commitment and real belief in training and in putting enterprise behind it?

Mr. Blair: It is a fact that unemployment is now more than double what it was when the Government came to power. The hon. Gentleman must explain why the Government are cutting funding for training the unemployed when unemployment is rising.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): My hon. Friend has referred to Sheffield, whose TECs have been in dialogue with the Secretary of State and his Ministers about the budget cut of 38 per cent. When the pit bull

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

terrier—the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who is constantly jumping up and down—was a Minister, representatives from the Sheffield TEC met him and tried to develop a proper partnership. A letter to the Minister from the Sheffield TEC says that the board of the TEC is not only frustrated because it cannot develop and deliver a quality service, but feels that it has been conned by the Government. That board consists of people from the private sector who spend two days a week trying to make training effective in a major manufacturing sector. They believe that they have been conned by the Government.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am aware that those concerns have been raised with the Secretary of State, and I hope that he will deal with them later.

Many of the TECs consist of people who came to them from business on the basis that they would have a genuine partnership with Government. They have found that their commitment to do more has become an excuse for the Government to do less. That is what is wrong.

What have the Government done recently for the unemployed? They have published what they call a five-point plan for the unemployed.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): Before the hon. Gentleman concludes his remarks on training, will he answer the specific question from my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) about his position in relation to the clear statement made by the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), on "On the Record"? If he cannot persuade the shadow Chief Secretary that training should be an immediate spending priority, nothing he has said in the past 15 minutes has any substance whatever.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman should have listened to what I said. He completely misrepresented the words of the shadow Chief Secretary. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman read our Budget submissions, which we published months ago, he would see exactly how funding should be restored.

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a transcript of exactly what the shadow Chief Secretary said in the "On the Record" interview on 19 May.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a matter for debate; it is not a point of order.

Mr. Blair: I was discussing the Government's five-point plan, which was first launched in April last year, again in October, and then in November, December, February, March, April and May. The five-point plan has been launched eight times; it has been launched more often than the Liberal Democrats.

Let us analyse the plan which the Government boast is the most comprehensive package ever given to the unemployed. The plan offers

> "In-depth advisory interviews for the newly unemployed . . . continuity at subsequent advisory interviews . . .special advisory interviews . . . extra help to those long-term unemployed"—

I presume that that means more interviews—and

> "intensive help with job-search"

Perhaps that is another interview. The idea that that amounts to the most comprehensive plan for the unemployed ever launched is risible.

Some Secretaries of State for Employment have tried to create jobs; some of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessors have created schemes; but he has created interviews. He should be the Secretary of State not for Employment, but for interviews. If the local election results in his constituency are any guide to the general election, he may be the first Minister to create a plan for the unemployed and then to participate in it.

Faced with the highest level of unemployment in the western world, thousands of new redundancies each week, record bankruptcies, closures and cuts, what is the Government's response? They have cut training places and closed training programmes which has put their pledges at risk. Then, to add insult to injury, the right hon. and learned Gentleman claims that he is offering more to the unemployed, when on any rational basis he is offering less.

If we have any evidence of the uncaring face of Conservatism, surely this is it. The Government lack not just compassion, but common sense. What other country would cut its budget for training the year before 1992? Is not the worst aspect that we are cutting training when all the evidence points to it being the single most important element of our future success? Even if unemployment were falling—not rising—that policy would be foolish. When people are being made unemployed and need help to return to the labour market, and when we are at the bottom of the recession, should we not now retrain and reskill so that, when recovery comes, it will be our industries, companies and employees that take the advantage of it and not those of our competitors?

Yet what do the Government do? Nothing: they have not one new idea, fresh idea or new policy. They cannot even decide on the temporary work programme that we know has been under discussion since February, but that discussion is obviously well advanced. The occasional leak to the newspapers or radio tells us that it has not yet been ruled out, but four months from when that programme was first raised, there are another 250,000 people unemployed. What will it take to make the Government act? The answer, I am afraid, is fear of general election defeat: that is all.

At the moment, the Government do not sufficiently fear the consequences of unemployment. When the chairman of the Conservative party was interviewed on "Channel 4 News" after the local council elections, he was asked about unemployment. He said:

> "The question is how much does it affect people's voting intentions, and, I don't think that there is very much evidence that it has all that much impact on people's voting intentions."

The Labour party's task from now until election day will be to prove him wrong, and we will.

When the pressure becomes too much, the headlines too bold, and the editorials too savage, when surrender becomes easier than resistance, the Government will do, what they were asked, as they did on the poll tax, the 16 to 19-year-olds training, transport, Europe and anything else. It will be too little, half-hearted and too late.—The Government are uncertain whether to make a virtue of listening or of standing firm. There will be a fit of indecision succeeded by a rash of misjudgments. That is not a healthy basis for government.

I understand that the Prime Minister has the first editions of the newspapers sent to him at 10 o'clock each evening. That is a revealing fact. Is not the difference between the present Prime Minister and the former one this: she used to read the newspapers the next morning to discover what she had done; he reads them the night before to discover what he should do?

We need action now on interest rates and we need the Government to stand up for the interests of small businesses. It is now that we need training cuts restored and special help for the unemployed. The tasks are too urgent and the needs too great to wait until the Government's indifference over unemployment is eventually replaced by their fear of the election result.

Two weeks ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us that the recession and unemployment were a price "well worth paying". It will be the Labour party's job to ensure that a price is paid by the Government—at the election.

7.58 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on the success of policies which have created over a million new jobs since 1979; welcomes the introduction of the most comprehensive range of measures ever available to help the unemployed back to work; notes the very substantial increase in spending on training over the last 12 years; and, in particular, supports the measures in the recent White Paper, Education and Training for the 21st Century.'.

The speech we heard from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was full of his usual blend of indignation, disingenuousness and false promises, and was punctuated by a total failure to answer any of my hon. Friends' questions. It is beyond dispute that had, the hon. Gentleman's party been in office, it would have made unemployment immeasurably worse and its current policies, if they were ever implemented, would raise unemployment sharply. On training, it is beyond dispute that the Labour party would not have made the enormous progress which we have made since 1979 and that its policies would ensure that all the progress that we have made would be put rapidly into reverse.

Let me begin by setting out our achievements. This country has made more progress, more rapidly, on training and employment in the past 12 years than in any previous period in our history. There are over a million more jobs in Britain today than there have ever been under any Labour Government, and last year we recorded the highest number of jobs in our history. More of our work force are qualified now than ever before and more are taking part in training than ever before. Employers are more committed to training than ever before. More young people are entering work well qualified; more of the adult work force is qualified, and at higher levels; and more high-skill jobs are being created and filled. The Government have played their full part at every stage.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield made much of the increases in unemployment in the past 12 months. He has taken to issuing ever more excitable press releases in recent weeks about the levels of unemployment in Conservative-held marginal seats. Before he counts his chickens, he might care to check his facts. He has recently produced a list of 46 Conservative seats, where the numbers of registered unemployed exceed the size of our majority. He neglected to point out that, in 45 of those 46 seats, unemployment is well below the levels prevailing when they were last fought at the general election. Indeed, unemployment in those 46 seats as a whole has fallen by more than 60,000, or over 25 per cent., since the last election, which is a bigger fall than the 23 per cent. fall in the country as a whole.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): My seat was one of those highlighted by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although the hon. Member for Sedgefield gloats over unemployment and rubs his hands with glee every time someone is made unemployed, we heard little from him in the days when so many new jobs were being created in my constituency in the west midlands? Where was he when the local Labour authority opposed employment training in Wolverhampton and turned down £700,000 from the Government? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that he is a total sham and a lot of hot air?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. She was also right to describe the hon. Gentleman as gloating. His speech was one long gloat about those figures.

In the most marginal Conservative seat in England, which is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), unemployment is more than a third below its June 1987 level. In the most marginal Conservative seat in Scotland, which is represented by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), unemployment is more than 36 per cent. below its level at that time. In the most marginal Conservative seat in Wales, which is represented by my hon. Friend, the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), unemployment is barely half the level it was when he was elected. Even in the hon. Gentleman's constituency of Sedgefield, unemployment is more than 37 per cent. lower than it was at the time of the last election in June 1987.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Minister mentioned events north of the border. Does he recall that, when the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland came up with the idea for Scottish Enterprise, the training investment organisation, he said that its purpose was to eliminate unemployment in Scotland? When will that target be met?

Mr. Howard: It will be met and, in time, that is exactly what we shall achieve. We are pursuing policies that will bring down unemployment in Scotland to levels that have not been seen for many a day.

The way in which the hon. Member for Sedgefield has been using the unemployment statistics is another vivid example of the Labour party's approach to politics, which was described by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health in her memorable phrase as "scaring, not caring". That sums up the Labour party's approach. Its very purpose is to foment alarm and despondency. It is an approach of which it should be thoroughly ashamed.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is present, will he give an undertaking that the Department will look carefully at the adult basic education units in Bathgate and throughout rate-capped Lothian region which are faced with closure? If those units are closed, how can people expect any kind of employment in the labour market? Will the Scottish Office give an undertaking to look at that serious matter?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is present and has heard the hon. Gentleman's question. I am sure that he will look at that matter.

Mr. Dalyell: I want an undertaking.

Mr. Howard: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield is fond of alleging that we are complacent about rising unemployment, but that is wholly untrue. Nor are we negative and alarmist like the Labour party. Unlike Labour Members, we do not spend our time fostering fear but get on with the job of providing practical help to the unemployed. The Govenment are providing more practical help than has ever been available before to help unemployed people back to work. The hon. Gentleman seemed to think that there was little point in providing skilled assistance to the unemployed to help them find jobs. He thought that that subject was fit for mockery.

Every month, the employment service finds jobs for over 100,000 unemployed people. For the present financial year, I have set it a testing target—to find 1·3 million jobs for unemployed people, 5,000 jobs every working day.

More than half of those who become unemployed leave unemployment within three months. In recent months we have stepped up our efforts to help the unemployed to higher levels than ever before.

Mr. Blair: Will the Minister at least admit that funding for training the unemployed has been reduced as we said? How does he justify that at a time of rising unemployment?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows the position, which has been explained to him time after time. When we looked at the studies and surveys on those matters which were carried out last autumn, we decided that it was right to adjust the balance of help provided to the unemployed. That is why we increased provision through the employment service and increased the number of places in job clubs and through the job interview guarantee scheme. When we saw that unemployment was rising in February this year, I announced an extra £120 million for employment training, specifically to meet that changed situation.

Mr. Blair: Will the Secretary of State admit, plainly so that it will appear on the record, that he has cut funding for training the unemployed as was said?

Mr. Howard: I have explained to the hon. Gentleman exactly what we have done. I have told him that, unless and until he can persuade the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury to endorse his spending proposals, nothing that he says on this matter carries the slightest conviction.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): Would not the hon. Gentleman's point carry much more credibility, had the Labour party not campaigned against the introduction of employment training, which is the biggest training programme for long-term unemployed people, and, initially, against the training and enterprise councils?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend, who introduced employment training in the teeth of sustained opposition from the Labour party, is absolutely right. It lies ill in the mouth of the Labour party to criticise that programme.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Secretary of State realise that one of the main employers in my constituency is the Central Statistical Office, which collects Government statistics? It is so concerned about the constant manipulations and fiddles in Government statistics that the figures that we have been given today are meaningless and no comparisons are being made. Does the Secretary of State recall telling me a month ago that 700,000 people are counted twice in the employment statistics—he has said that again tonight—because they are doing more than one job?

Mr. Howard: If the Central Statistical Office lies in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, he should know that the comparisons that we make are entirely consistent. If he has any doubts about that, I suggest that he asks his constituents who work in the Central Statistical Office because he will then see that that is entirely true.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall give way to the Chairman of the Select Committee, but then I must get on.

Mr. Leighton: We are trying to get the facts straight on the funding for employment training. Does the Secretary of State agree that during the last autumn review the TEC chairmen asked that the funding for ET should remain the same, but that there was a cut of £365 million, of which the Secretary of State has restored £120 million—one third of the original cut? The TEC chairmen are asking for the other two thirds to be put back. Since then, unemployment has risen for 14 consecutive months and the Secretary of State has not put back a single penny piece. Are not those the facts?

Mr. Howard: Naturally, the TEC chairmen asked for more money then and I dare say that they will ask for more money again. Does the hon. Gentleman know of anyone who is in charge of a budget who does not want to see it made bigger and does not ask for more money? Of course, that is what the TEC chairmen want, but they have been told in the past and will be told again that they will have the resources they need to do the job that they have been set.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I cannot give way again. I must press on.

I want to tell the House—although I understand why the Labour party are reluctant to listen—about the ways in which we have been helping the unemployed. Job clubs are a highly successful means of helping unemployed people back to work. Some 64 per cent. of unemployed people leaving job clubs go straight into jobs, training or further education. There were no job clubs when the Labour party was in power. Such clubs were introduced by this Government. This year, we are providing an extra 100,000 places in job clubs and the new job interview guarantee scheme, which is a new project that we have piloted in inner cities. It brings together people without jobs and employers with vacancies. There was no such scheme when the Labour party was in power.

Restart interviews were scoffed at by the hon. Member for Sedgefield. They were the first systematic means to call in and offer help to the long-term unemployed and were introduced by this Government. There were no restart

interviews when the Labour party was in power. Now we are also offering restart courses—one-week job preparation courses.

The enterprise allowance scheme—the first ever national programme to help unemployed people become self-employed—was introduced by this Government. Already more than half a million new businesses have been founded by the EAS. Now that scheme is run by the training and enterprise councils, which have been given the flexibility to tailor it to meet the needs of different areas. There was no EAS when the Labour party was in power.

Employment training—the first ever national programme offering training to the long-term unemployed—was introduced by this Government when my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) was Secretary of State for Employment. There was nothing remotely like employment training when the Labour party was in power.

The employment service is now a next steps agency with much greater flexibility and efficiency so that it can offer help to the unemployed more effectively than ever. Yes it is true that it is now providing throughout the country a comprehensive five-point, job-help package to meet the specific needs of unemployed individuals. That includes in-depth advisory interviews for all newly unemployed people and an individual back-to-work plan agreed with each one of them. There was nothing comparable when the Labour party was in power. The resources that have been made available to the employment service have been increased to ensure that it can provide that help effectively and efficiently. This year there will be about 650,000 opportunities, through my Department's programmes, to help unemployed people. No Government have ever done more than this one to help unemployed people back to work. We shall continue to spare no effort to ensure that we give them all the help that they need.

What would be the position on unemployment today if the Labour party was in power? We heard a good deal about economic mismanagement from the hon. Member for Sedgefield. With the benefit of hindsight, I would be the first to admit that interest rates were cut too far in the autumn of 1987 after the stock market crash. That unleashed the inflationary pressures which we are now getting back under control. It is absolutely clear that, if the Labour party had been in office in 1987 and 1988, the unemployment and recession we face today would be far worse. Throughout that autumn and winter, the Labour party called time and time again for still lower interest rates.

I am delighted to see that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is with us this evening. He was confronted with the evidence by Brian Walden on 17 March, who put his own statements back to him, and their effect on him was remarkable. He could not begin to conceal his discomfiture and was reduced to stuttering incoherence. He started grunting like an unhappy Japanese Sumo wrestler. He knew then and he knows now that the policies that he was then advocating would have made matters infinitely worse. The sum total of the Labour party's approach to economic policy is to call for lower interest rates in all circumstances and at all times, regardless of whether that would be the appropriate step to take. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's policy is the policy of the parrot—memorise a phrase and repeat it mindlessly and endlessly in all places and at all times, regardless of whether it has the least relevance to the task in hand.

So much for the policies that the Labour party would have pursued if it had been in power during the past few years. What of the policies that it now proposes? What would be their effect on unemployment? The effect of the minimum wage policy on jobs would be devastating, and hon. Members do not have to take that from me. The Fabian Society pamphlet said:

"If the national legal minimum wage were a fixed proportion of median earnings, like half"—

that is only the first stage of Labour's policy—

"the restoration of differentials would have to be prevented, otherwise the proportion could not be held. If differentials were restored to any degree"—

as both the pamphlet and trade union leaders made it clear that they would be—

"median earnings would rise and that would necessitate a compensating increase in the national legal minimum wage, setting off more restorations of differentials. An automatic upward chase would have been set in motion with inflationary consequences."

The pamphlet went on to support estimates that up to 880,000 jobs would be destroyed.

The Fabian Society is not alone in saying that. The *Financial Times*, which the hon. Member for Sedgefield was so happy to call on for support during the Labour party's recent political broadcast, said in an editorial this week:

"Labour's minimum wage would raise unemployment among the unskilled, while doing little to relieve poverty. Moreover, it would reduce the incentive both for workers to train and for employers to train them."

Joe Haines in the *Daily Mirror* described the minimum wage by saying that it

"won't work and won't help".

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that the unemployment consequences of the minimum wage would be "little short of disastrous."

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): There are thousands of women in my constituency who do dirty and degrading jobs for less money at the end of the week than the Secretary of State spends on dinner and who would be interested to hear Conservative Members sneering at the notion that they should earn a living wage. If a national minimum wage is so dreadful, why are we the only country in Europe without it?

Mr. Howard: That is not the case. As to the hon. Lady's constituents, of course they need to be helped. We do so sensibly through family credit, not by introducing a minimum wage which would destroy their jobs.

Even the *Sunday People* has said of Labour's minimum wage:

"it would only cause more unemployment and deny jobs to those who most need them".

The stupidity of the Labour party is that it confuses low-paid jobs with low-income households, but 62 per cent. of those whose pay is in the lowest tenth of earnings are in the richer half of the population. That is why the sensible way of helping those on low incomes is to pay family credit, which is targeted on those in low-paid employment. *[Interruption.]* We do not flinch from ensuring that the taxpayer helps to look after people on low incomes who need help and it is news to me if the Opposition no longer subscribe to that proposition. We

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believe that that is a more sensible way of achieving our objectives than is destroying hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The commitment of the hon. Member for Sedgefield to policies that will destroy jobs would not stop with a minimum wage. He would introduce a new tax on jobs, costing up to 50,000 jobs. He would act immediately to introduce the European Commission's social action programme, which was denounced by every major employers' organisation in Britain because it would add £3·5 billion to their costs and destroy over 100,000 jobs.

What about Labour's strikers charter? What about the return of secondary action and the flying picket, the neutering of the ability of the courts to deal with unlawful action, the compulsion on employers to recognise trade unions, and the new guarantee that strikers cannot be dismissed? Is that how the Labour party intends to encourage jobs and the creation of the resources from which it says that it will pay for all its grandiose schemes?

On training, the Opposition would not have made any of the progress which we have made since 1979. Not only would they never have conceived of the range of training measures which we have introduced, but even when these measures were put on a plate right under their noses their reaction was to fight them tooth and nail. They opposed every training initiative from the start. They attacked YTS. Their leader, as shadow Education Secretary, toured the country in the early 1980s denouncing vocational education in general and our TVEI programme in particular as fit only for

"hewers of wood and drawers of water".

The Opposition opposed ET.

Unlike the Opposition, we have taken training seriously. We have increased spending on training two and a half times faster than inflation since 1979. We inherited 6,000 training places for young people from Labour and at present we have 350,000 Government-sponsored training places. That is 60 training places for every one which Labour was able to provide. More than 3 million young people have benefited from youth training and its predecessor since 1983.

We now have in place, with employment training, the biggest training programme for the long-term unemployed in Europe. That increased commitment has been fully matched by British employers, who, in 1986, were spending around £18 billion a year on training. Now they are likely to be spending more than £20 billion a year, and they have done even better than that. Since 1984 the number of employees receiving training from their employers has increased year in year out, and last year it was no less than 85 per cent. greater than it was just six years before. Moreover, we have put in place a national network of training and enterprise councils—the most radical leap forward in employer commitment to training in this century.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): The worst measure ever.

Mr. Howard: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield. The Labour party should make up its mind about its policy towards training and enterprise councils——

Mr. Ray Powell: They are the worst thing ever.

Mr. Howard: Indeed?

Mr. Powell: Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will listen to someone with experience in training. For 12 years I chaired the CATO—community activities and training in Ogmore—organisation in mid-Glamorgan in my constituency. In 1981, 600 people were registered under the community programme as training with the organisation. This year, since the advent of training and enterprise councils, the local TEC has decided to withdraw the contract from CATO, which has had in all 4,000 people training under its auspices, so it has been deprived of a substantial contract. Some 250 places have been lost and 280 have been lost under job training —directly as a result of community enterprise training in mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Howard: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not give the House the benefit of his views on TECs in general. Those views are far removed from those of his Front-Bench spokesmen. He will know from the experience that he has recounted that the community programme was not a training programme and he ought to appreciate that no Government owe a duty to any or every training provider. We owe a duty to the people who need help and training. The world that the Opposition occupy is a world in which nothing changes. They believe that a training provider with a contract should always retain it, regardless of whether it is providing what is needed to meet current demands.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is so keen on meeting the needs of those who need help, does he deny the clear evidence given by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) of the reduction of funds for these TECs?

Mr. Howard: I have explained the position on funding several times—the hon. Gentleman could not have been listening. Perhaps he should have a word with the shadow Chief Secretary, with whose remarks on this subject I shall deal in a moment.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Before my right hon. and learned Friend moves off the subject of TECs, may I tell him that, as an employer of 30 years' standing, I consider that they hold out the best prospect for training for our young people that I have known in my lifetime?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He is much more in tune with the needs of industry than are Opposition Members.

Together with TECs we are putting in place a new framework to increase dramatically the incentives and opportunities available to individuals to train. We are creating the first ever proper national system of vocational qualifications in this country. We are changing the tax system to give individuals a tax incentive to train. We are building on our world lead in developing open and flexible learning. We are pioneering a system of career development loans to provide further help to individuals who wish to pay for their training.

The White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" is a revolutionary package of measures for young people. Every young person leaving full-time education at 16 or 17 will have a training credit; will have access to the unified system of national vocational qualifications; will be able to have his achievement

recognised in a way that gives equal esteem to vocational and academic attainment; will have access to an independent and invigorated further education sector; and will have a national record of achievement, to set out what he has achieved in school, and to build on as he continues to learn throughout working life.

Many of these measures are revolutionary, not just in Britain but in a world context. Training credits are a world first. The reform of vocational qualifications, based on the standards of competence needed for real work in real working situations, is setting an example which other countries want to follow.

The Opposition have no credentials whatever to pontificate about training; their record in Government and in Opposition is one of abysmal failure. It is against that background that we must assess the proposals which they now put forward. Those policies would throw the great progress made since 1979 into complete reverse. Foremost among them is Labour's advocacy of compulsion for the training of young people—of legislating to ban thousands of jobs held by young people. Since Labour also plans to restore benefit entitlement to young people who refuse the offer of a training place, its plans would make it illegal for a young person to take a job without training, but perfectly acceptable for him to choose the dole without training.

That is the programme with which Labour approaches the 1990s. That is the future that it offers our young people. We have abolished the dismal route from school to the dole queue which so many of our young people used to follow. Labour would restore it and encourage people to take it. That is the banner under which the new model Labour party marches into the 1990s. But of course, that is not all. The hon. Member for Sedgefield has promised more money—£900 million of it—on television this morning. The only difficulty is that, every time the hon. Gentleman gets up to promise more money, the shadow Chief Secretary slaps him down and says he cannot have it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) referred earlier to the shadow Chief Secretary's appearance on "On the Record". I am sure that all who had the privilege of witnessing that will long treasure the experience—[HON. MEMBERS: "It was brilliant."] The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said:

"Only pensions and child benefits are commitments."

She said that Labour must be careful not to confuse commitments which mean something with goals which mean nothing at all. We should understand, she said, that the Labour party could plan to do something and say so publicly, but that that was in no sense an undertaking.

Mr. Roy Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am concerned about the time. The Secretary of State has been speaking for half an hour. Is it not about time that he finished?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must be wholly neutral. Both Front Benches are tarred with the same brush in this regard.

Mr. Howard: I understand why Opposition Members do not want to listen. The hon. Lady said that Labour might hope to do this or have the intention to do that, but that none of those phrases amounted to a commitment. After all that, she said:

"I want the public to judge us on what we are saying".

She talked about Labour's plans for education, health, social security, overseas aid, transport and even for lower taxation, but the hon. Member for Sedgefield should note that she did not once mention training or employment measures, nor did she ever utter the word "priority". I again invite the hon. Gentleman to say exactly where training comes on Labour's list. Is it a commitment or a priority? Is it a priority to which the Opposition are not committed, or a commitment to which they attach no priority?

We may have invented a new game. "Spot the ball" has nothing on "spot the pledge". The rules could be simple. The person who could rank in their correct order Labour's commitments, priorities, undertakings, aims, goals, desires, pledges, promises and objectives would win the prize. We would welcome employees of the Labour party and their families taking part, because they would have no more of a clue than anyone else.

At the next election, the British people will face a clear choice on—the issues of employment and training. It will be a choice between a Government who have created more jobs, more businesses and more wealth than ever before, and an Opposition committed to policies which would destroy millions of jobs, cripple our economy and wreck our future prospects. They will choose between a Government who have done more to advance training in Britain than any other Government this century—and an Opposition who have attacked and tried to undermine every step forward for training made in the past 12 years.

The choice will be between a Government bringing forward radical and necessary reforms to widen opportunity still further and to build upon the successes of the 1980s, and an Opposition determined to narrow choice, undermine excellence and lower quality, taking us back to the failed policies of the 1960s and 1970s. The British people will make that choice decisively, and this Government will remain to carry their mandate into the 1990s and beyond.

8.32 pm

Mr. Huw Edwards (Monmouth): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in this crucial debate.

Like many hon. Members, I enter the House following the death of a Member, in my case Sir John Stradling Thomas. He represented the constituency for 21 years and, as hon. Members know, he was a popular and charming man and his death saddened many people. Before I took my seat, I had the honour to attend his memorial service in the Crypt where the Speaker, in a moving tribute, said that Sir John was proud to be a Welshman and proud to be the Member for Monmouth. I am also proud to be a Welshman and the Member for Monmouth.

I was born and brought up in a fine Welsh community, the Welsh community in London. One of the great advantages of being brought up in that community was that one developed an affection for all parts of Wales—the north, the south and the rural and urban areas. I also developed an affection for people in Welsh-speaking areas as well as for those in non-Welsh-speaking areas. Monmouth has such a mix of people. It has a small number of Welsh speakers and many who do not speak Welsh.

Monmouth is a beautiful constituency, as anyone who visits it will see. I do not need to tell hon. Members about

[Mr. Huw Edwards]

the beauty of the Usk, Wye and Llantony valleys because most of them visited the area during the by-election campaign. Monmouth has beautiful towns, villages and hamlets, one of which is Llanfihangel-Tor-Y-Mynnedd which I invite hon. Members to visit.

Monmouth is a rich farming area with a fine tradition in agriculture. Regrettably, many farmers have faced great difficulties in recent years. They have seen farm prices go down and their interest rates go up. The costs of farming have risen, and many people have left the land. Many farmers in Monmouth are worried that their children will not be able to inherit the farms, and they fear the consequences of losing the family tradition of farming. I hope that I can represent both the farming and the urban communities.

Like many beautiful constituencies, the beauty of Monmouth often masks some of its serious and growing problems. The recession is hitting people throughout the constituency and it affects people in the towns and villages as well as those who work in the private sector and farmers. They have seen the effects of high interest rates and ever growing unemployment. Unemployment in the constituency has risen by 43 per cent. since last June and it is affecting people throughout the constituency. What could be more insulting to the people of Monmouth who only a few years ago were constantly told about Wales's economic miracle than to be told now that those who are out of work are paying a price that is well worth paying to reduce inflation?

I wonder how the people who work in the American Express shop in Abergavenny felt when they were told that, after more than 20 years' service, they were to lose their jobs in six weeks. They did not receive an apology from the company or even much real warning. How did they feel with they were told that they were paying a price that is well worth paying even though their productivity and business increased this year? Such redundancies affect American Express in Neath and Swansea and other areas in south Wales.

Anyone who visits the constituency is welcome to go to the jobcentres in Monmouth and Abergavenny where they will see the jobs and the wage levels on offer. The rates are £2 or £2·50 an hour for vital jobs such as looking after sick people or working in private nursing homes. In such occupations, low pay is a massive problem. People despair when they look at the jobcentre advertisements offering £2·50 an hour. That is less than £100 a week, which is £80 to £90 net take-home pay. For years in the 1980s Ministers said that there was no problem of low pay. Amazingly, they now tell us that a minimum wage policy of only £130 a week, which is all that we are suggesting, would create massive unemployment. They cannot have it both ways.

Unemployment and low pay are inextricably linked, and we often hear the argument that low pay is better than no pay. Such an argument can be used to justify anything. How much below £130 a week do wages have to go? Pay of £6,500 a year when multiplied by three would buy nothing in the property market. People on such pay are totally excluded from that market, yet £130 a week is hardly generous; it is £3·40 an hour.

Figures from the Department of Employment show that in Gwent last year one in four men and six in 10 women earned less than the Council of Europe decency threshold. I worked for the Low Pay Unit on those statistics, and that has had a great influence on me. I shall continue to advance such arguments in the House.

Last year in Gwent, 23 per cent. of women worked full time for less than £120 a week. There is no work ethic like the work ethic of the low-paid. Many of them are working for little more than they would receive on benefit. In effect, they are virtually volunteers, and that is a remarkable work ethic.

That evidence is proof, if proof were needed, that Britain must have a minimum wage policy. Britain is the only country in the EC without one. We have already lost minimum wage protection for people under 21 resulting in ridiculously low levels of pay, low levels of benefit and disqualification from benefit, and we have seen the effect of that on what is supposed to be a civilised society. Young people sleep in doorways in the Strand, destitute, a phenomenon which has arisen only in the past three or four years as the result of the Government's social security, employment and housing policies. That is an insult to a civilised society.

The fear of redundancy, in particular in the national health service, proved an important issue in the recent by-election. At the beginning of the campaign, Guy's hospital announced a possible 600 job losses and the same occurred in hospitals in Bradford. That raised considerable fears among people working in the health service in Monmouth, such as the Nevill Hall hospital and the Mount Pleasant hospital. People feared for the future of the health service and for their employment as a result of the Government's pressure to encourage all hospitals with more than 300 beds and all units to consider opt-out status.

I do not apologise for anything that was said in that campaign. I stand by what I said throughout. The Government's restructuring of the health service amounts to its fragmentation, a way of abrogating responsibility and of ensuring, if not immediately, in years to come, the hiving off of the less profitable areas of the health service, the chronic sector and long-term care, and the possibility —more than a possibility, I think—that the profitable areas could be ripe for takeover by some of the private health organisations such as American Medical International, Humana and BUPA. What guarantee is there that that will not happen should we have another Conservative Government? It was perfectly right to raise those fears and anxieties.

I spoke to many people in the campaign who work in the health service—good administrators, consultants, nurses, paramedical staff and ancillary staff. People at virtually all levels agreed with me that nearly all the principles of the NHS are now being violated as the result of the changes which are now going through. If hospitals want to ditch care of the chronically ill or the mentally ill, they may well do so. The principles of equality and comprehensive care is disappearing. We are having a two-tier system. General practitioners are saying that all the time. Unless general practitioners are budget holders, they will lose when it comes to getting people into local hospitals.

The principle of professional autonomy is disappearing. The medical profession is seeing a cultural revolution in the health service whereby power has gone from those with clinical expertise to those with managerial expertise —the supermarket philosophy. During the campaign, nothing could be said about the health service without

some of my opponents, and one in particular, using the analogy of the supermarket. When it comes to the NHS, people in my constituency and throughout Britain find supermarket analogies abhorrent.

The hospital that was the focus of the campaign is an ideal district general hospital. It sits under the hills in Abergavenny. Many of its patients come from Blaenau Gwent, Tredegar and Ebbw Vale, as do many of its staff. Tredegar and Ebbw Vale formed the spiritual birthplace of the NHS which established the principles of health care in Britain in the post-war period and those principles and values are widely shared throughout Monmouth and the country as a whole.

The by-election showed the country that those principles of equality, comprehensive provision, universality and collective responsibility are the values of the health service that the British people want to maintain, and I will use every opportunity in the House to advance those principles and to convey people's anxiety about the current restructuring of the health service. I shall continue to serve the constituents of Monmouth in the rural and urban areas to the very best of my ability.

8.45 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Edwards). He has shown a great commitment to his constituency, to his country and to his predecessor. I do not think that it is too excessive to say that his predecessor was a friend of mine. He was the deputy Chief Whip in this place. On one occasion, because of my views about one or two Government policies, he questioned my parentage, but in the nicest possible way.

I do not intend to question the Government's policy tonight, but I have been somewhat disappointed. I am sorry that I was unable to visit Monmouth, but after my appearance in Ribble Valley and what happened there, I thought that it was as well to keep away. I can understand the hon. Gentleman making his maiden speech on the health service, but I hope that he will excuse me if I do not follow him on that. I understood that the debate was on training and employment, but that is a matter for the hon. Gentleman. However, I had hoped for something rather better from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), whom I had hoped would address himself to that topic.

I went to the great length for me of listening to what the hon. Gentleman said. As I understand it, he said that there is a recession and it is the Government's fault and that the London Business School and Cambridge Econometrics say that it will get worse. He then referred to the bit of the OECD forecast which happened to suit his argument, but not, I fear, to the rest. The OECD has the best possible record in forecasting. It gets it right more often than not. It suggests that there will be an increase in economic activity next year, a decrease in inflation and interest rates and that the United Kingdom economy will look rather better than it is at the moment. I do not pretend that it is wonderful at the moment, but then I never pretend that the Government can make things more wonderful or less miserable than most people. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who has gone off for his dinner, should suggest that that is the case.

I waited with eager anticipation for the great miracle, but I waited in vain. We had no more than a garbled speech attacking the Government and their economic policies, and attacking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for making every possible effort to deal with the immediate problems of unemployment, whether they be short-term or long-term.

I find it a little distasteful that a party which in the past has made something of a reputation, and probably a deserved reputation, for itself out of its concern for working men and women and their prospects of employment immediately and in the long term, should then imply, but no more than that, that there is some miracle cure whereby, on the election of a Labour Government, there will be no unemployment. I appreciate that that was not said "in terms", and I cannot be bothered to analyse what was said to Brian Walden a week last Tuesday. But that is not the point: I am talking about the impression that people receive—about general perceptions. I hope that other hon. Members will agree that it is unfair to suggest that any Government, whatever their political colour, can snap their fingers and cure the problem of unemployment.

Let us go back to 1979. I remember the Conservative party poster that told us "Labour Isn't Working"; I suppose that we won the 1979 general election partly as a result of that poster. In those days, we all believed, or purported to believe, that Governments were capable of creating full employment. The Conservative Government believed that in 1970-71, when things started to go wrong —but we too were wrong, and we lost the election in 1974.

Let me tell the Labour party—if it does not mind my offering advice to "this great movement of ours"—that it cannot do it again. Would it not be better if, rather than Labour yah-booing across the Chamber and us boo-yahing back, the whole House admitted that at a time of perpetual change it is best not to pretend that we can solve the problems tomorrow? What we can use are the training systems outlined by the Secretary of State. Perhaps they could be better; perhaps more money could be available; perhaps other ideas could be advanced. But it does no one any good to say, "Your ideas are rubbish." It is clear from what the Secretary of State has said that the Conservative party has gone to enormous lengths to try to solve the unemployment problem, in both the long and the short term. I should have thought that it has done that as well as any party could have.

What positive contribution was made by the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield—not to the problem whether we win or lose the next election but to the problems of the people out there who really lose their jobs, and must face not only that but the possibility of their children losing theirs? He did not say a word about that. Over the past 12 years, we have tried to do what we can. Let us get this into perspective. It is not as though the United Kingdom's problem were unique; it is not, as has already been spelt out. No doubt the London Business School and the Liverpool School of Economics could explain why. Certainly there is no point in my boring the House with the statistics: we know that this is a problem that affects the western industrialised world.

What everyone should know, however, is that there is not a socialist solution to the problem of unemployment. I should have thought that that was self-evident, following the developments in central and eastern Europe. Moreover, I am sorry to have to tell Opposition Members that countries such as Japan and Taiwan, which employ vast numbers, do not do so by means of a minimum wage.

[Mr. Barry Porter]

I am merely asking Opposition Members to be realistic about one thing. There will not be a general election this month, or in October; I trust that there will not be one until next spring. Can we get rid of the current hysteria and try to do something for the people we purport to represent —the unemployed? The Secretary of State has admitted, very properly, that we loosened the reins too much in 1987. I cannot remember any Opposition Member saying at the time that it was all very wicked, although I may be wrong about that. The way out of the problem, however—for most of the unemployed, at any rate—is lower inflation, lower interest rates, an increase in economic activity and more profits. As someone once said—I forget the name now—"There is no other way."

8.55 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Edwards) on a fine and moving maiden speech. It was outstanding—the best maiden speech that I have ever heard. My hon. Friend is a worthy victor of an outstanding by-election, and we look forward to hearing him speak many times in the future.

The Select Committee on Employment published a report today on employment prospects, which I urge all hon. Members to read. I will not say much more about it, because I believe that we are to debate it on Estimates day; suffice it to say that, according to the CBI, business optimism is now at its lowest for 10 years, and that the Institute of Directors told us that it had never known such bad employment numbers.

As all the witnesses agree, unemployment will rocket for the rest of the year, and will continue to do so next year —certainly until the next election, whether or not that takes place when the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) said it would.

The Government are deliberately using unemployment as a weapon of economic policy. Deflation does not work in a mysterious way; it works by causing unemployment. The blunt club of high interest rates imposed over a long period strangles the economy, deliberately induces recession and causes mass unemployment; and, the Government hope, eventually reduces inflation.

Any fool can reduce inflation by inducing a recession. The successful policy is one that controls inflation while retaining a high level of employment. The present Government have failed to do that for 12 years. They say that their action is necessary to squeeze out inflation, but who put it there in the first place? We experienced one Government-induced recession in the early 1980s, which destroyed 20 per cent. of industry and inflicted unemployment of another 2 million to solve the problem of inflation. There has been a Conservative Government ever since. Why, then, has inflation returned? Because of the crass errors caused by Government economic mismanagement.

In 1988 there was a giveaway Budget, the "big bang" of financial deregulation and the consequent credit binge. Now, after all the pain and suffering of the early 1980s, we must go through it all again. There is no need for any of us to talk about the pain and human suffering that unemployment causes; we have had a graphic and vivid illustration in the interview in *Vanity Fair* with the former Prime Minister, who explained exactly how much devastation it produces. After 12 years, the Government are squirming with embarrassment at their failure. The Prime Minister said that there would be no recession. When the recession came, he and the Chancellor said that it would be short and shallow. Now, the Chancellor claims to discern vague stirrings in the economy. Could anything be more pathetic?

We have had 12 years of Conservative Government, 12 years to get it right. We have had 12 years of the North sea oil bonanza and privatisation receipts, yet we have a country flat on its back, in deep recession, with the whole of its industry crying with pain. There are redundancies everywhere and unemployment will continue to rocket for as far ahead as anyone can see. We also have a yawning skills gap with our main competitors which is growing wider all the time, and the virtual collapse of training in many industries.

In those circumstances, traditionally we look to the Department of Employment, which hitherto has been an honourable Department. However, we now find the repellant sight of the Secretary of State who oozes complacency and indifference to the unemployed with every utterance suggests that it does not matter and that things are not so bad. As a monetarist, instead of seeking an expansion of the economy, he seems to be urging his Cabinet colleagues to strangle the economy even further. Instead of standing up for his Department's budget, he lays down and encourages the Treasury to walk all over him. He has presided over huge cuts in the Department's budget for adult and youth training.

The previous Secretary of State used to laud employment training. He said:

> "ET is the largest, most ambitious programme ever undertaken in its scope and the opportunity it offers."

It was intended to take 600,000 people in any one year. We all remember the propaganda at the time about fitting workers without jobs to jobs without workers. We do not hear much about that now. Instead, there are cuts in ET. The Secretary of State says that the unemployed do not need training.

The Secretary of State launched the training and enterprise councils. The launch was accompanied—he did not disagree with the figure I gave when I intervened during his speech—by large cuts in the budgets of TECs. What a way to encourage and bolster the voluntary activity of those who are giving their time to the TECs. He knows that at the time of the autumn statement the TEC chairman urged him not to cut the budget. Yet he announced a cut of £365 million of which he has now put back only one third. Since then, unemployment has rocketed for 14 consecutive months. The Secretary of State has not obtained a penny piece for the unemployed.

As a result of all that, there is a crisis within the TECs and among the training providers, almost all of whom are having to make many of their trainers redundant. Training for special needs in many parts of the country has come to a complete stop. Does the Secretary of State know that this afternoon the Select Committee took evidence from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders? It announced that it is making 600 trainers redundant.

I have a letter from a chief executive of a TEC which says that many TECs are doing nothing for women returners. It says that many TECs discriminate—the Secretary of State can have a copy of the letter if he wishes

—against women returners because they would have to pay £50 child allowance. Where is the Secretary of State? Where is the battle for a counter-cyclical increase in his training budget? Does he care that training in many industries is collapsing?

For example, the bottom has fallen out of the construction industry. Many firms are going bust. Anyone who does not believe that should look at what is happening in docklands. Construction employers tell me that an extra 100,000 construction workers will be unemployed this year. Does the Secretary of State know that this year there has been a drop of 75 per cent. in apprentices registered in construction? Does he care about that, and is he doing anything about it?

I spoke to the printing employers yesterday. They are now renegotiating youth training with 82 TECs. That is a problem for them. They told me that this year, as a result of smaller cash incentives to firms which are suffering in the recession, there will be a 50 per cent. reduction in youth training in the printing industry. Does the Secretary of State tolerate it?

The country will face increased competition. Where is all the propaganda about gearing up for 1992? If we cut training in the printing industry by 50 per cent., the Germans will wipe the floor with us. They are doing so already. What will the Secretary of State do about that? When disasters and catastrophes are put under his nose, he pretends that he cannot see them and that they are not happening. In fact, he makes trite little comments suggesting that everything is all right. We had an example of that for half an hour this evening. Everything is not all right. It is going from bad to worse. As Secretary of State for Employment, it is his job to do something about it and to stand up and defend his Department's budget, which he is not doing.

I now deal with engineering. I have a document from the Engineering Employers Federation which states:

"present YT funding policies are reversing the important gains made in YTS."

The Government should be coming up with counter-cyclical expenditure on training, which is counter inflationary. However, instead of standing up and fighting its corner, the Department of Employment is actively conniving with the short-termism of the Treasury. That is what we have come to after 12 years of Conservative government. The Government have run the country into a quagmire, and youth training is certainly suffering. The Government are not honouring the youth training guarantee.

Not long ago, we were told that the most urgent problem seemed to be a 33 per cent. drop in the number of school leavers. Now, because of the recession, every budget is being cut and all recruitment is being stopped, and, instead of a shortage of youngsters, there is a surplus, despite the fact that there has been a drop of 33 per cent. Youngsters are now leaving school with no job, no YT place and no benefit. That is happening in my constituency and in the London borough of Newham as a whole.

I hope that the Minister of State is paying attention. During the previous Employment questions I asked him about youngsters who were leaving school in Newham with no YT place. He said that I was misinformed. I try not to be misinformed, so I went back to the borough of Newham and got the figures. At that time, there were 312 young people leaving school in Newham with no job and with no YT place. I immediately wrote a letter to the Minister of State, but I am still waiting for a reply. Why have I not received one and why have I had no apology? I was not ill-informed and I can tell him that the figure has increased. There are now 384 young people in Newham with no job and no YT place. I want him to answer and to reply to my letter.

The Minister might also note that unemployment in my constituency increased by 40 per cent. in the last 12 months. The training boards have been abolished, so there is now no statutory duty on employers to train. Instead, there are supposed to be voluntary industry training organisations, but whatever happened to those organisations? The truth is that most of them are ineffective, underfunded and understaffed—they are run by two men and a dog. What interest do the Government show in them? Virtually none at all.

I have a briefing from the organisation set up for engineering. It states that the Government show no interest in it, only in the TECs. It states:

"What it has not so far specifically done is to give the same active, high profile support for the job that the industry training organisations will do as it has for the important work of the TECs. Clear public commitment of this kind would strengthen the influence of the new bodies."

Where is the Government's commitment to the industry training organisations? There is none. It is patently and blatantly obvious that this is a Government of failure. There is a yawning and widening skills gap which the Government's inaction is compounding.

The public have come to realise that we have a blinkered Government of dogma and false ideology who have failed. The public see the signs of that failure all around them in their everyday lives. They know that we, as a nation, can do better and that to do so we shall need a new Government. The people know that, and the Government know that the people know that. That is why the Government are frightened to have a general election, but they cannot put it off for ever. They must eventually meet their maker—the electorate—and when they do, they will surely reap retribution for the misery of the mass unemployment that they have inflicted on this country and for their failure to achieve an educated work force which will enable this country to compete in the modern world.

9.9 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). He was in his usual characteristically lively form. He has the old socialist principle behind him that one must spend money on a problem and that the more money one spends on it, the more virile is one's attitude and one's position. When the hon. Gentleman calls the Government dogmatic, I remind him that the policies of the Labour party never change: it simply seeks to spend more and more of the taxpayers' money on any problem.

The Government reacted to the problems of the early 1980s by creating the training programme to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred. Now they have taken the radical approach of examining that training programme to find out whether it is delivering value for money. They have changed their policy in order to concentrate more on advice and guidance for the unemployed, rather than imagining that people who have been trained once and lose their job need yet more training.

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen should not fall into the trap of believing that only more and more training will solve the problems of the unemployed. They should not forget enterprise, which is in danger of being the Cinderella of the debate. They should not forget that the people who are losing their jobs at present, particularly in the south-east, already have a high level of skill and had been trained extensively in the work they did. The answer is not always that which the Opposition suggest in their dogmatic fashion.

I come to the debate as one of the stars of the misery index—that is to say, the curious figures sent out every month by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). As I have the sixth largest constituency in the country, inevitably it has a fairly large raw unemployment figure. Fortunately, it is still lower than when I was first elected in 1983. However, I follow the logic of the hon. Member for Sedgefield up to this point. If indeed there is a direct correlation between the level of unemployment and the majority of hon. Members in the House, the fact that unemployment in my constituency is less than half what it was in 1983 when I won the seat leads me to the conclusion that I shall be returned at the general election, whenever it comes, with an increased majority. I do not know exactly how the reverse formula works, but I should have at least double the majority.

As I said in *The Guardian* this morning, people are not so naive as to judge a Government after 12 years on a single issue. Opposition Members who pin all their hopes on unemployment—it has been made clear in the debate that that is what they are doing—will find that the people of Britain are a little more subtle and sensitive in their judgments and will not be content simply to judge the Government on one set of figures, however inaccurately and misleadingly those figures are presented by the Opposition Front bench team.

I wish to make a few remarks about the causes of the difficulties that we are experiencing in Britain. On Monday this week, I asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster a question about the position of the banks, their attitude to small businesses and the rates of interest that they charge for loans. I am delighted to say that, within 24 hours, my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) raised exactly the same point in Prime Minister's Question Time, when we learned the satisfying news that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer would meet and talk to the leading clearing banks.

At a time when interest rates have fallen by 3·5 per cent. since last October, it is extraordinary that the banks have increased their interest rates and effective lending rates to small businesses in my constituency and elsewhere by as much as 6, 7 or 8 per cent. above the base rate now obtaining in Britain. The banks give as a reason the difficulties that they have experienced in lending to third-world countries. I accept that one must consider that argument, but when one is told that the interest charged to small business in my constituency and elsewhere must be kept high because such firms are a high risk, one asks which is the chicken and which is the egg.

How does arbitrarily raising interest rates help to reduce the risk of small businesses going out of business and causing more unemployment? I hope that the discussions that are to take place between my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the banks will lead to a different attitude being taken by those lenders who have contributed in their way to some of the problems that this country currently faces.

In Swindon, I have the additional problem of the attitude adopted by the Labour-controlled council, which for the past five years has pursued a policy of preventing employment growth. The council argues that green undeveloped land on the outskirts of the town should be protected, and that, unless the town's infrastructure can catch up, it would be wrong to allow growth to continue. However, it does not argue that the growth that has occurred in my constituency over the past 20 years has turned it from a safe Labour seat into a Conservative seat. It would be unworthy of me even to suggest that that might have anything to do with the council's thinking.

The consequence of the council's policies is that the additional jobs that could have been created by new companies moving into the town—in accordance with the pattern that was seen for 20 years without a break—have come to an end. People who lost their jobs in the past 14 months do not have the hope of new employment that would exist but for the mistaken policy of the local Labour-controlled council.

As my right hon. and learned Friend said, there is more to offer the unemployed than training—but when the alternatives are read out, it creates only amusement on the Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Sedgefield was present in the Chamber a moment ago, but now he is not. If he were in his place, he would have an opportunity to apologise to all those people working in the employment service who dedicate their best efforts to helping the unemployed with the interviews that the hon. Gentleman so mockingly denigrated.

Labour has become the party of instant action—but instant action is nearly always the wrong action. Labour denounce the Government when they suggest that consultation could be useful or that they are considering an issue. Labour want only instant action. The instant action they want now is for large quantities of money to be thrown at the problem of the unemployed—although the Opposition's own shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury says that they cannot have that money anyway.

There is some sense in talking to an unemployed person before sending him or her on a training course. There is some sense in finding out what skills he or she already has, and in trying to match the individual's needs to the job opportunities that exist.

The White Paper on education and training for the 21st century that was published last week belies the Opposition's suggestion that the Government are running out of new ideas. That White Paper enthusiastically endorses the extension of training credit vouchers, which are being taken up all over the country with great interest—particularly by those training and enterprise councils that are piloting the scheme.

I spoke last night to the chairman of the Bradford TEC, who said that, putting the purchasing power of a voucher in young people's hands was the best possible news because, for the first time, they are in control of their destiny. The scheme is being taken up enthusiastically in pilot areas, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will soon decide to extend it across the country, where it will be widely welcomed. The White Paper makes it clear that that is the direction in which the Government are going.

I am delighted about the White Paper's commitment further to extend education compacts, which are the right way of bridging the gap between education and industry. Once again, it was bitterly opposed by the Opposition.

The Opposition's policies are designed only to increase unemployment. Had they been in power during the 1987 stock market crash, they would have reflated the economy far more than we did. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was present earlier and was challenged about that; he wriggled and giggled, but had no answer to the fact that, in November 1987, he clearly said that the Labour party would reflate the economy more than the Government. The effect would have been higher inflation.

I do not suggest that a Labour party's reaction to ever higher inflation would have been a deflationary policy, but it would have led to a run on currency, which would have forced it into a high interest rate policy whether it liked it or not. The effect would have been higher deflation and a higher rise in unemployment. We would have been in a position to say to Labour Members, "You got it wrong," as they say to us, but let them never forget that, in late 1987, they believed that we should have gone further with the mistake that we made at that time. Labour Members are the last people to criticise us in that respect.

It is not only the policies that they advocated then that would be disastrous for this country. The national minimum wage is written off by almost everybody who takes an interest in the subject. Trade unionists are anxious to persuade the Labour party not to indulge in that policy. I ask the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) to read the collected thoughts of Mr. Gavin Laird and Mr. Bill Jordan, who are clear on the subject. They say, "Please don't do it." The shadow Chancellor, when asked about the effect of the national minimum wage, said "Maybe one or two people might lose their jobs." Does he not take any notice of what is said by the trade unions, who still seek to run the Labour party?

Mr. Dalyell: As the hon. Gentleman mentioned Mr. Gavin Laird and Mr. Bill Jordan, he will acknowledge that both were against that was done to the engineering industry training board. They believe in training as it was in the engineering industry, which was very beneficial to my constituency.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I always listen carefully to what he has to say, but that was not germane to the point that I was developing. However, it shows that, once something is set in concrete, Opposition Members never seek to change it. No radical spirit is left in the Labour party. It can try only to preserve and conserve. Perhaps we should call it the Conservative party, because that is what it is. It has no ideas for the future only ideas of the past.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East intervened briefly from a sedentary position to say that 11 European countries support the social action programme, but that is not right. Eleven European countries signed the social charter, but if he studies debates in the European Community on the implementation of the charter by draft directives, he will see that there is growing concern about the implications of those proposals for employment.

The Labour party's policies in the future, as in the past, will only drive up the level of unemployment, whereas Conservative policies, by reducing inflation and boosting competitiveness vis-a-vis our partners in Europe and elsewhere, will help to increase prosperity and reduce unemployment, which we rightly regard as a scourge. The Labour party does not understand that. It never has and it never will, because it does not understand the nature of competition.

Our policies are now working. Inflation is coming down and so are interest rates. On the strength of that, in due course, the next general election will be won by the present Government.

9.25 pm

Mr. Michael Carr (Ribble Valley): It is clear that unemployment is now out of control. The Department of Employment's internal projections are reported as forecasting that 2·6 million people will be out of work by October, and most outside economists expect unemployment to rise above 3 million by March 1992. Moreover, the longer-term outlook is bleak, with unemployment likely to plateau at such levels under present policies. That is hardly a sign of bottoming out, and is certainly not a reason to predict an economic revival early next year. In view of the Prime Minister's grandiose early statements about a classless society, we might have been forgiven for thinking that the economic mismanagement of the Thatcher decade would be remedied forthwith. However, the announcement of a 40 per cent. cut in the employment training budget hardly seems an appropriate first step.

It is scandalous, when unemployment is rising faster than in any other EC country, that the Government saw fit to cut public funding of training. Under this Government, Britain is less skilled, less well educated and less well trained than all our major competitors.

The unemployment figures in themselves are worrying, but they hide more sinister statistics. The real price of unemployment is increased poverty, a rise in homelessness, a deterioration in the nation's health, the deskilling of thousands of our citizens and the cost to the public purse. The Prime Minister has pledged that the Government will be a caring Government, yet his Chancellor of the Exchequer has let slip the fact that Government economic policy is deliberately adding to unemployment in order to reduce inflation. The Chancellor's remark that unemployment was a price "well worth paying" rightly shocked many people, and showed how little the Government are prepared to do to combat high and rising unemployment.

Liberal Democrats fully understand the importance of reducing inflation, but we do no accept that the price for that needs to be a return to mass unemployment. Other countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and the United States, run their economies with lower unemployment and lower inflation, and avoid the high price that the Government seem prepared to pay.

The debate on unemployment in the recession has so far completely ignored the real-world price of unemployment. The most immediate effect of the rise in unemployment will be an increase in poverty. Not only unemployed people, but their families and those who depend on their wages will suffer.

In the 1970s, low pay was accepted as the root cause of poverty. However, figures based on Department of Social Security data were released last month by the Campaign for Work, and they clearly show that unemployment was a key characteristic of poverty in the 1980s. Those figures

[Mr. Michael Carr]

show that, although poverty is often, rightly, associated with groups such as pensioners, the disabled and lone parents, by far the most common characteristic of the poor is being out of work. Before unemployment finally started to fall after the previous recession, more than 50 per cent. of the poorest families were afflicted by unemployment. It is symptomatic of the way in which people are discussing unemployment in this recession that those figures have not been widely reported.

Such comprehensive figures for the previous recession have only become available in the past year or two, so it is unlikely that data for the effects on poverty of this recession will be available for some time. However, the clear message from the experience of the 1980s is that the recent increase in unemployment will put back the fight against poverty in Britain by several years if the present failure to tackle unemployment persists.

The Government compounded the misery of poverty and strengthened the link between it and unemployment through their social security and taxation policies of the 1980s. Those policies have resulted in a large reduction in the real value of safety net benefits and make poverty an increasing likelihood for many thousands more on the dole. Not only has the real value of unemployment and related benefits been cut since 1979 by about 5 per cent., but the benefit system itself has become more restictive in its regulations and has been starved of the resources that it needs for administrative efficiency. For much of the late 1980s, the Government's policy seemed to be to blame the unemployed for being out of work and then to penalise them through their social security policies.

Many other aspects of the Government's social security and taxation policies will mean that unemployment may be even more closely linked to poverty in this recession. The Government admit, for example, that the poll tax will be with us until at least 1993, with unemployed people liable for at least 20 per cent. of their poll tax bills. The unemployed will now pay water charges, whereas under the rate rebate and supplementary benefit system, they were protected. Such social security and taxation policy changes come on top of measures in other policy areas, which have tended to affect the unemployed disproportionately. Council house rents and rents for private accommodation have increased by well above the rate of inflation. Public transport has suffered from underfunding and from above-inflation price rises.

The evidence linking unemployment with policy could not be clearer; nor can anyone have any doubts about the impact on the unemployed of various policy changes, especially in social security. In terms of poverty, the social costs of unemployment were high during the recession of the 1980s; in this recession, they will be even higher.

In the 1980s and 1990s, homelessness has been closely associated with joblessness. Between 75 and 80 per cent. of homeless people are out of work. Although that may not be surprising, it is important to recognise the vicious circle that is immediately created. Once someone is trapped by homelessness, for whatever reason, employment is hard to come by. That in turn makes securing proper accommodation almost impossible.

The figures for repossessions in 1990, when repossessions almost trebled to 43,890, illustrates the changing nature of home ownership since the last recession. As the Council of Mortgage Lenders has commented:

"Unemployment has proved of greater importance this time round and now accounts for almost 10 per cent. of (new) homelessness cases. This is an indication only of the cases where unemployment was cited as the direct cause of homelessness. In many of the other cases unemployment contributed quite substantially to the family/relationship break-ups which account for 60 per cent. of homelessness."

Such evidence highlights the human misery that is caused by unemployment. Unemployment causes stress which in turn, causes family disputes which, in turn, can cause homelessness. The social costs of unemployment can be a vicious spiral of personal misfortune—a vicious spiral that leads to a deep national problem.

There is a general recognition that unemployment represents a deskilling processs, with individuals losing touch with the labour market and finding that their skills become less and less relevant to the market's needs. Those economic consequences are alarming enough, but they pale beside some of the health implications of long-term unemployment. Research is increasingly showing the damaging effects of unemployment on an individual's mental and physical health.

The longitudinal study of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which links death records with the 1971 and 1981 census data, reveals that the death rates of unemployed men and their wives were 21 per cent. above the national average. It is expected that that trend will be reaffirmed by this year's census. A link between suicides and unemployment has also been established. A study in Edinburgh from 1978 to 1982 showed that suicide attempts were 11 times more likely among unemployed people than those in work.

The economic costs of unemployment are also many and varied. They include the direct cost of unemployment to the Exchequer through a higher number of claimants and lower tax receipts, as well as many indirect costs. Despite the meanness of current benefit policy, the social security costs of unemployment are high. The Department of Social Security's expenditure plans show that, for an increase of 100,000 in the number of unemployed, social security payments increase by £305 million.

We hear stories of training credits. They undoubtedly have some merit, but they must be seen in the context of the statistics I mentioned. In Sweden, £12,000 is committed to the training of each unemployed person. The Government are mooting a figure of £1,500. That shows that, in Sweden, unemployment is seen as an opportunity to retrain and reskill the work force. Unfortunately, the Government see unemployment as an economic necessity and as a political irritant.

The loss to the economy of deskilling many members of the work force is particularly serious because the effects can last for years. We believe that training is the key to ensuring that the long-term levels of unemployment fall. Filling skills vacancies with skilled workers seems to be no longer the main aim of Government employment policies. The Government also seem reluctant to recognise the need to retrain those already in work. If Britain is to keep pace in the world economy, one that will increasingly demand a skilled and technologically advance work force, the Government must commit substantial funds to education and training now.

9.36 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend from Monmouth (Mr. Edwards) for his maiden speech. It was an eloquent, reasoned and dignified contribution, and we all welcome the fact that he mentioned, with fond memories, the previous Member for that constituency. We look forward to many contributions of that quality in the years to come.

This has been an interesting debate, as two worlds have collided in their perception of training and the unemployed in this country. The excellent speech from the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) injected a dose of reality into the debate, but I found the speech of the Secretary of State for Employment simply remarkable. We were treated to a story of no cuts —just adjustments—the most comprehensive provision for the unemployed, record-breaking achievements, the best training provision this century and revolutionary methods. That world may be inhabited by the Secretary of State for Employment, but it is not inhabited by Labour Members and those outside the House.

The key issue is why, after creating unemployment, the Government are effectively doing nothing to help the unemployed. Why is it that, after acknowledging publicly the depth of the skills crisis, the Government have cut the training budget? Why is it that, after 12 years of Conservative government, Britain is less equipped than any nation in Europe to embrace the challenges, respond to the changes and improve our competitiveness in the new economic realities of the 1990s? Why are the Government unable and unwilling to tackle the issues which are immediate and urgent and which lie at the heart of Britain's future in the 21st century?

The debate has rightly focused on the importance of the recession. It has focused on the breaking of guarantees to young people and adults. It has focused on the selling out of the TECs after they were offered such a warm send-off. They were not advised that they would have no responsibilities or proper cash provision. We have focused on the scandal of special needs. It is morally objectionable for the Government to seek to cut funds from the schemes that provide not only skills but social support to the most vulnerable in the community. Will the Under-Secretary refer to that point?

Unemployment is a crisis. Put simply, Britain's labour market is in total disarray. That is the legacy of 12 wasted years in which the Government have been in office. We were not informed in their manifestos of 1979, 1983 and 1987 that mass unemployment would be a permanent characteristic of their economic policies. Rather, we were offered economic miracles and the Chancellor confirmed that we are experiencing one.

We were offered industrial renaissance, and the deposed former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) talked about the rebirth of Britain. If that is the case, why are we in such an appalling economic mess, with recession deep, levels of economic activity low, and disillusionment with the Government's ability to cope so widespread?

I shall focus in the remaining few minutes on the Government's unemployment record. The Government cannot now trade excuses in public. They cannot blame scapegoats or find anyone on whom to pin the responsibilities that they have discharged so ineffectively over the past decade. Why is unemployment now rising faster in Britain than anywhere else in Europe? In Europe in the past year, unemployment among the under-25s has been, on average, 1 per cent., whereas in Britain it has been 32 per cent. Why has unemployment in Britain increased by 100 per cent. since 1979? Why have the number of vacancies slumped by over 26 per cent. and why have the number of people chasing each job increased by 136 per cent.? That does not smack of an economic miracle but of something quite different.

Although the Government make great play with their employment growth record, which is the other side of the labour market coin, it is stripped of double jobbers and training places. The Government have created only 460,000 part-time jobs in 12 years. What kind of a record is that to be parading around Britain? It is the worst record of employment growth among OECD countries. I challenge the Government to respond to those statistics, because I always use their statistics, courtesy of the computer at the Department of Employment. The Labour party will continue to take advantage of that excellent facility.

Why have we now lost 2,112,000 manufacturing jobs and 163,000 construction industry jobs? That does not smack of an economic miracle for those in manufacturing, who now find themselves with no future in that area.

Why have apprenticeships in the manufacturing industry slumped from 266,000 in 1979 to a miserable 87,000 in December 1990? The crisis in manufacturing is that training has been ripped out of it, and we now have very few apprenticeships, while countries such as Germany, France and Scandinavia are pushing forward. They see a future and they invest. In the early 1960s, in periods of Conservative Governments, there was always a slump in the number of vacancies. Why did we have the highest unemployment this April since the 1930s?

It must be submitted that that is not the stuff of which miracles are made. Day in and day out, we are still told that the Government have created employment and that things are not so bad. This evening, the Secretary of State for Employment suggested that a commitment made in Scotland to eliminate unemployment was still on their agenda. If that is so, the Scots see little chance of it becoming a reality.

To find a microcosm of the panic measures and the ineffectiveness of Government economic policy in this country, we need look no further than London, which we discussed earlier today. The conning of the capital by the Conservatives during the past decade is simply breathtaking. Why is it that, in London, vacancies have slumped by 75 per cent. in a decade? Why is it that unemployment has risen by 300 per cent.—not doubled, but trebled? Why has the number of people in London chasing each job increased by 1,000 per cent.? Londoners have been conned by a Government unwilling to tell the story that is now unfolding as we approach the general election.

Of course, the Government always respond by saying, "What about our jobs record?" What about it? Figures published by the Department suggest that, excluding training places, 40,000 jobs have been created in Britain's capital city in 10 years—4,000 jobs a year for a population of 6 million or 7 million. That is a simply breathtaking statistic when viewed in relation to the Government's claims made day in and day out.

We ask simple questions. Why is it that, faced with 2·6 million unemployed in October and possibly 3 million

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

unemployed next year, the Government will provide no cash for a temporary work scheme? Why, when faced with a deepening skills crisis, will the Government not reinstate the £400 million cuts that have been made? Why, when the training and enterprise councils flagship is in danger of sinking, is there no funding or leadership from the Government? After 12 years, why do we have a labour market which is in disarray and has no strategic overview?

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: No.

The answer to all those questions is no, no, no—because the Government simply do not care about what is happening. The Prime Minister has been attacked for his dithering. I can say with sincerity that the Secretary of State for Employment and his Ministers are dithering and drifting and not providing the direction that is badly needed in Britain.

Other Ministers have tried to help the unemployed. There have been various changes, including fiddling the figures and removing people from the unemployed figures. The restart scheme, which involved recycling, was introduced by Lord Young of Graffham. There was ridicule when it was suggested that we should train the workers without jobs to fill the jobs without workers. The removal, recycling and ridicule are now to be followed by amazing inactivity.

Tonight, we have heard that our attack on the Government's employment record is hurting. The misery index has been mentioned, and we have heard overtures this evening to suggest that we should have a truce until next year. I offer Conservative Members a helpline. We are willing to listen to them and give them the statistics that the Government will not. If they phone my office, we shall not ask them to leave their name. They can remain anonymous: they need merely leave their majority and the number of their constituents on the dole—we shall do the rest.

We know that the Government's record on both jobs and unemployment is deplorable. We need a change of Government before we can tackle the problems ahead of us. The only unemployment that we want to see is among Ministers and Conservative Members. To that end, we shall fight and win the election, and give skills and the jobless a high priority in a Labour Government.

9.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): I start by apologising for missing part of the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I know that he will accept my reason for not being here as I was returning from a visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, where I was studying training arrangements in that country. I answered many interested questions from the Germans about recent developments in our training policy, particularly training credits, which the Germans view positively and about which they were very encouraging.

I shall try to answer some of the questions posed by hon. Members during the debate, then offer one or two reflections on what is revealed by the exchanges on unemployment between the parties.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Edwards) on his maiden speech and, as other hon. Members did, on the fitting words that he used about his distinguished predecessor. I must say that I disagreed with what he had to say about the minimum wage. He should attend to the question put by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State about the job destruction effects of a minimum wage to the hon. Member for Sedgefield—a question that was not answered. The hon. Gentleman should perhaps answer it; I hope that he will take it seriously. He will find that it pays in this House to listen carefully to what each of us has to say and then to do intellectual justice to it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) made a thoughtful speech with whose tone and substance I very much agreed, but I shall return later to some of what he had to say.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the Chairman of the Select Committee, claimed that the youth training guarantee is not being honoured. I apologise for not yet having replied to his letter about YT opportunities in Newham. I shall ask for a draft tomorrow and reply as soon as I can thereafter. I emphasise that the Government are firmly committed to that youth training guarantee. This year we have increased spending on YT even though the number of young people has fallen by 5 per cent. The hon. Gentleman's assertion about the guarantee cannot be true globally speaking, however, for the simple reason that we have not reached the end of the school year and thus do not yet know how many claims will have been made on YT.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) referred to alleged breaches of the guarantee, too. That was a bit rich coming from a member of a party that failed when in power to offer any guarantees to the unemployed.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Minister prepared to state that there is no TEC area in the country in which the guarantee is not being honoured?

Mr. Jackson: I have already explained that that does not arise until we know how many school leavers there are. We are firmly committed to the guarantee, and we will discharge it.

I particularly agreed with the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) about the Employment Service and its value in advising and counselling the unemployed. The mocking words of the hon. Member for Sedgefield about the service were a serious misjudgment. He will find that all the professionals in the field will confirm the value of this kind of assistance. Every month, the Employment Service places about 100,000 unemployed people in work, and Opposition Members would do well to support this work, not to denigrate it.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) went on at considerable length about things that we already know about unemployment, but he conspicuously failed to come up with positive suggestions about what to do about it —and I very much regret that.

What I want to say next is perhaps a little unusual for a wind-up speech on an occasion such as this. One of the most interesting features of the debate has been the extent of the common ground between Government and Opposition. Some obvious common ground is to be found in our shared concern about unemployment and about the

position in which unemployed people find themselves. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley should not claim a monopoly of concern for himself or his party.

Moreover, there is considerable common ground about what should be done and what can be done to help the unemployed. My hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South was so right about that. There is no dispute between the Government and the Opposition about the importance of fighting inflation, either. The Opposition have come to accept the Government's view that there is no trade-off to be made between higher inflation and lower unemployment: we cannot spend our way out of unemployment.

Secondly, reference to a pay policy was conspicuously absent from the speeches of the hon. Members for Sedgefield and for Fife, Central. The Opposition, in short, accept the Government's view that state intervention in pay bargaining is not the right way to fight unemployment. That too is a major piece of common ground.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister said that he agreed with much of what my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) said about unemployment causing homelessness, poverty and ill health. We do not think that such a price is worth paying, but the Chancellor does. That is the important difference between us.

Mr. Jackson: I was trying to set out the areas of common ground. The speech by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley gave few clues to what the Liberal Democrats would do.

The third area of common ground between the Government and the Opposition is that, in response to probing by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, it became clear that the Opposition's commitment to spending on training is hedged about with many qualifications on affordability. Plainly, the Opposition accept the Government's view that it is impossible for Government to beat unemployment by increasing public spending on training.

The debate has shown that the Opposition have no miracle cure for unemployment, a phrase that my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South was absolutely right to use. The Government have no miracle cure either, and nor have the Liberal Democrats.

The debate has shown a surprising amount of common ground on unemployment policies, but it also reminds us of what continues to be a fundamental difference between the parties. Government policy is committed to the principle of deregulation, to increased flexibility in the labour market, and to a reduction in the cost of employing labour, and that policy succeeded in creating more than 3 million new jobs in the 1980s. The Opposition are committed to a variety of measures to regulate the labour market, and they will all increase the cost of employing labour, reduce employment and destroy job opportunities.

The Opposition have chosen to focus on the problems of unemployment, and they owe the House and the country answers to the questions about their policies. I had hoped for some enlightenment from the hon. Member for Fife, Central, but there was none. I shall repeat some of the questions. Has the hon. Member for Sedgefield estimated the number of jobs that would be destroyed by the Opposition's industrial relations proposals? Has the hon. Gentleman estimated the number of jobs that would be lost if his proposals for a training levy were implemented because those proposals would add to industry's costs? If he has made such an estimate, perhaps he will tell us the number of jobs that will be destroyed. The hon. Gentleman nods, so I expect that he will do so in the near future.

Does the hon. Member for Sedgefield agree with the CBI estimate that the European social action programme, which his party endorses, will cost about 100,000 jobs? If he disagrees with that estimate, perhaps he will tell us why and let us know how many jobs he is prepared to see that programme destroy.

What is the Opposition's response to the Fabian Society's pamphlet about the job destruction effects of Labour's minimum wage policy? We have repeatedly asked that question but have had no answer. Does the hon. Member for Sedgefield agree with the Fabian Society estimate of 850,000 lost jobs? If he disagrees, perhaps he will tell us why.

To do justice to the hon. Member for Sedgefield, I should say that he has made some progress in shifting the Opposition's policy on employment and training away from some of the rather sterile and unconstructive posturing in which his predecessor engaged in the 1980s. We remember the line taken by the Opposition about youth training and the technical and vocational education initiative. The Leader of the Opposition said that they were fit only for hewers of wood and drawers of water, but now they are very popular with the Opposition.

To hear what the Opposition have to say about employment training, one would think that they had supported it from the start, but that was never the case. The hon. Gentleman has made some headway in making his party adopt a more constructive position, but until he is prepared to give some serious answers to the questions being put about the Opposition's policy, I fear that all his well-honed rhetoric will simply lack in credibility.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 284.

Division No. 158] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Buckley, George J.
Allen, Graham	Caborn, Richard
Alton, David	Callaghan, Jim
Anderson, Donald	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Canavan, Dennis
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Ashton, Joe	Carr, Michael
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Clelland, David
Barron, Kevin	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Battle, John	Cohen, Harry
Beckett, Margaret	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Beith, A. J.	Corbett, Robin
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Corbyn, Jeremy
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Cousins, Jim
Benton, Joseph	Cox, Tom
Bermingham, Gerald	Crowther, Stan
Blair, Tony	Cryer, Bob
Boateng, Paul	Cummings, John
Boyes, Roland	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Bradley, Keith	Cunningham, Dr John
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Dalyell, Tam
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Darling, Alistair
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*

Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*

Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the success of policies which have created over a million new jobs since 1979; welcomes the introduction of the most comprehensive range of measures ever available to help the unemployed back to work; notes the very substantial increase in spending on training over the last 12 years; and, in particular, supports the measures in the recent White Paper, Education and Training for the 21st Century.

DANGEROUS DOGS BILL

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The motion is not debatable.

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Dangerous Dogs Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Housing (Govan)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): I want to raise with the Minister the question of housing in the constituency of Govan. It is axiomatic that, as the constituency of Govan is part of the city of Glasgow, our housing problems arise from the condition of that city and our problems will be solved only if Glasgow's policies and resources are adequate to meet housing needs.

I begin by putting a question to the Minister: is there a housing problem on a scale that demands extraordinary action well beyond the present resources that have been applied within the city of Glasgow? That is the key question. There are two responses. The first is the Government's response as conveyed to me in a letter from the Prime Minister dated 29 May this year. His answer was no. The second is that expressed by experts, investigators, the council and councillors in Glasgow, the city's officials, the city's Members of Parliament and, above all, by the experience of the people. Their answer to the question is yes; there is an exceptional problem that requires exceptional action.

I shall set out in the course of my argument the relative terms of the Prime Minister's letter and I shall then examine them against our arguments from Glasgow and from within Govan. I believe that those who argue against the Government will be able to prove conclusively that there must be an urgent response to the private cries of despair from the families who are tortured by dampness, overcrowding, poor environment and homelessness and those who are terrified because there is no security for their homes.

Let me read a relevant passage from the Prime Minister's letter that I received in reply to one of mine:

"I recognise that a substantial proportion of Glasgow's council housing suffers some degree of dampness and condensation, although the returns made by the District Council to the Scottish Office indicate that the problem is not as extensive as is quoted in your letter."

Glasgow district council house condition survey shows that 38 per cent. of the city's public sector housing stock —62,400 houses—is affected by dampness and condensation. The tenants argue that 53 per cent. of the housing stock—87,000 houses—is affected.

The tenants' views are not lightly dismissed in the house condition survey. In paragraph 4.14 it says:

"In the tenants' view, 53 per cent. of GDC houses had a dampness or condensation problem, much more than the 38 per cent. reported by surveyors, and much more than in any other tenure. The tenants' estimate probably includes recent or recurrent problems not visible when the surveyors made their inspection."

The district council does not dismiss the argument that 87,000 rather than 62,000 houses are affected.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that Glasgow district council's figure is correct and that 38 per cent., or 62,400 houses, are affected. That figure represents human misery on an appalling scale and it is reflected in Govan constituency. The housing condition survey showed that in my constituency 57·8 per cent. of the housing is below tolerable standards of dampness or has condensation or some significant dampness or condensation. It is no wonder that 57·8 per cent. of the housing stock is in that condition because, according to the survey, 31·3 per cent. of houses lack central heating and 20 per cent. of houses lack roof insulation.

Even if the tenants' figure is not accurate and the council's figure, on which the Prime Minister relies, is correct, the Prime Minister acknowledges that a substantial proportion of Glasgow council housing suffers some degree of dampness and condensation. We have an admission from the Prime Minister that there is a pretty big problem. What is his response? Unfortunately, it is self-satisfaction. In his letter to me he gave no sign that the Government understand the true position in Glasgow or Govan.

The Prime Minister continued in his letter to tell me:

"Glasgow's gross HRA allocation for 1991-92 is over £100 million, which amounts to 22 per cent. of the Scottish total although Glasgow's share of council housing in Scotland is under 20 per cent."

The Prime Minister showed a fair degree of self-satisfaction in boasting about the figure of £100 million. I will tell the Minister what that translates to in real terms in my constituency. For new capital starts this year, we have the princely sum of £280,000. That was allocated to one project, phase 1 of re-wiring Mossheights. That is an allocation for new capital starts of £280,000 in an area which has 14,500 council houses. That cannot possibly touch people's needs for new windows, replacement of lead pipes, roof repairs or extensive renovation.

I shall list some of the areas in my constituency. There is Hillington, Penilee, Cardonald, Mosspark, Dumbreck, Corker hill, Drumoyne, Teucharhill, Moorpark, Ibrox, Cessock, Riverside, Tarfside Oval, Old Govan itself, Craigton and Shieldhall. Corkerhill requires £1 million to be spent to put pitched roofs on houses with flat roofs which are letting in water day in and day out. Such is the condition of the flat roofs that, when the workmen go on them to patch them, they break up the roof. Water penetrates those homes daily, and dampness spreads to increase illness among the children and other members of the community. Shieldhall, for example, requires work to the value of £1 million. I could cite case after case in which there is a crying need for investment, which cannot possibly be met from new start capital of £200,000.

Acute problems exist in all the areas I mentioned—including overcrowding and homelessness. The right-to-buy policy has increased to the point where there is a shrinking council house sector. Glasgow people cannot do what they used to do—move up the housing quality chain. That was once the way of life in Glasgow. It was rough justice, but it was accepted that, one day, one could move from poor housing conditions into better conditions. That choice is no longer available to the people of the city.

A report produced by the technical services agency for District 31, a Govan community council, confirms evidence produced by Corkerhill community council, and illustrates the need to tackle the scourge of dampness and condensation which makes life a nightmare and is a cause of despair for so many people. The report concludes:

"These properties, with the operations outlined in this report, could provide housing of a standard fit for the next century. As they are, however, the balconies will continue to give rise to penetrating dampness, and the present insulation/ventilation and partial central heating system will make them expensive to heat, throughout, to a level where thermal safety . . . could be achieved. As a result, the elderly tenants in particular will suffer from cold stress-related illnesses, while large families will experience outbreaks of mould to thermally-isolated parts of their homes."

That reference to mould reminds me of a statement by a lady in Corkerhill in respect of the letter written by the Minister in response to a complaint about a lack of housing investment. The Minister replied that Glasgow was the city of culture—implying that things were a lot better there. At a public meeting during Glasgow's year as the city of culture, a lady said to me, "Aye, culture—I've had it growing on my walls for a year."

Earlier this year, Glasgow's municipal housing convenor was quoted in *The Glaswegian* newspaper as saying that it would take 300 years and more than £2 billion to make the city's housing damp-free. He said:

"We're in complete sympathy with tenants' anger. But the Government won't let us spend anything like the amount that's needed."

Three hundred years is a bit long for folk to wait.

Security is another problem in my constituency, as it is in other parts of the city—especially where there is much drug-related crime. Old people and others are living in anxiety and terror. They are terrified to use the lifts. They are also frightened about staying at home in case their doors are kicked in and they are attacked. They are terrified to leave their homes, in case their doors are kicked in while they are out and various items of household furniture, televisions, videos, pension books, and money are taken.

I can give the Minister an example from Ibroxholm Oval, which is a couple of hundred yards from my own constituency office. Last week, there were 11 break-ins in that area in the course of just five days, and two old people were severely assaulted. One young girl has suffered five break-ins. There was virtually nothing left to take from her flat except the lass's kettle—and last week, that was stolen as well. People living in such conditions are absolutely terrified. The fundamental problem is that they have no secure door entry systems. The district council, to its credit, installed concierge services in Iona court and Broomlown court, which are on either side of Ibroxholm Oval, but that made Ibroxholm Oval the major target for folk who engage in crime, and everything that happens will happen inside Ibroxholm Oval.

Security is not only a housing but a law and order issue. The Government must act with a special allocation of money specifically for security. Our old people deserve no less.

The problems that I have described demand action and the mobilisation of resources. The Government have it within their power to act. One measure would transform the prospects for meeting people's housing needs—the writing off of the city's housing capital debt of £976 million. That huge burden imposes a huge penalty on tenants. It means that 75p in every pound of rent collected goes to meet debt charges. With that burden around the neck of the council and tenants, there is no chance of effectively tackling the housing crisis facing Glasgow and Govan families.

I put that to the Prime Minister. It is not a new suggestion or an idea that I have invented, because it can be found in the Grieve report on Glasgow's housing. That was an objective study. It was set up by the district council, but it was not laudatory of everything that the council has done. It was an objective panel—Sir Robert Grieve, the late Sir Monty Finniston, Professor Karn and Ian Clark. They suggested wiping off the capital debt.

That is a valid idea for a Tory Government, because since 1979 they have written off £15 billion of capital debt. For example, £4·9 billion was written off to privatise the English water companies and £3·4 billion was written off to privatise British Steel. If they can write off that capital debt to stuff the pockets of people who will make a profit from it, they can do something for the people of Glasgow.

Writing off just under £1 billion would compare favourably with the £2·7 billion that is calculated to be the advantage to the south-east of England of mortgage interest relief. I put that to the Prime Minister. His reply was that Glasgow, in acknowledgment of that capital debt, is receiving just over £22 million in housing support grant —the exact figure is £22·7 million. He said in his letter to me that Glasgow has enough money to meet expenditure. It is not meeting expenditure that is at issue but whether that expenditure is enough to meet the housing needs of the people, and the answer is no.

I want to put that figure of £22·7 million in context. It must be realised that it is only a part payment of the huge amount of interest that must be repaid on the capital debt. I do not know the figure for the current year, but in 1991 it cost Glasgow £119 million to service the capital debt —£19 million more than the £100 million that the Prime Minister boasted will go to Glasgow this year. When one compares that £100 million about which the Prime Minister boasted with the £195 million that the Grieve report said would have to be invested in Glasgow's housing, one begins to see how the Government are failing the people of Glasgow.

Compared with other parts of Scotland, Glasgow has a low income per household. Therefore, it is heavily reliant on council housing. Unfortunately, it tops the list of major cities for social deprivation and need. The justification for those statements is contained in the Grieve report, yet people still live in those adverse circumstances and face dampness and illness, overcrowding, lack of maintenance and inadequate security. They are lumbered with a housing debt that they simply cannot meet.

As the Grieve report said, Glasgow is a special case. Within Glasgow, Govan—along with other areas of the city—represents a special case. I want what the people will demand—a capital debt write-off as the prerequisite of a real attack on housing problems, and an emergency injection of cash—now—for security purposes.

Ordinary folk in Govan and other parts of the city of Glasgow have a human right, and that human right is to enjoy the same kind of housing that the Minister and I can buy for ourselves and our families—in terms of spaciousness, comfort and security. That is the challenge that I put to the Government tonight, and I hope that I shall get a positive response.

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) on his success in securing this Adjournment debate. He has raised a number of issues. Many of the criticisms that he voiced were directed at Glasgow district council, whose responsibility it is—within the allocation made available to it—to address housing needs. I have no doubt that the council will take note of the hon. Gentleman's comments about Corkerhill and about dampness, of his call for more security systems and of all the other points that he made about individual housing schemes in Glasgow.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

The hon. Gentleman has recently made critical comments about Scottish Homes. I should mention to him the fact that no less than £82 million is being spent by Scottish Homes in the Glasgow area this year, a considerable proportion of it in Govan—a point to which I shall return in a moment.

Glasgow has been generously treated in terms of capital allocations, which, as the hon. Gentleman said, have totalled more than £100 million, representing more than 22 per cent. of the total resources, while Glasgow's proportion of Scottish local authority housing is just under 20 per cent. I should also mention the fact that an additional allocation of £750,000 has been made available to Glasgow to enable the council to introduce proposals for a wide range of accommodation to house the young and single homeless.

Moreover, under the partnership initiative, considerable sums have been made available to Castlemilk and the final HRA allocations included £26·9 million to support housing regeneration projects in the Castlemilk partnership area, which, as I know the hon. Gentleman would agree, has some of the most pressing problems anywhere in Scotland. We have made available further additional resources, amounting to £21·8 million for innovative projects in Ardencraig, Scarrel, Glenacre and Croftfoot in Castlemilk over six years.

The hon. Gentleman asked about dampness and condensation. In recognition of the extent to which those problems affect Glasgow's housing—including housing in areas such as Corkerhill—the council has been invited to bid for a share of the additional resources of £2 million which we are making available for energy savings and efficiency projects, and I hope to announce the distribution of those resources shortly.

Glasgow's non-HRA capital allocations amount to more than £24 million for 1991-92. Overall investment in housing in Glasgow this year amounts to more than £125 million, setting aside the resources earmarked for the innovative housing projects in the Castlemilk partnership area. That means that the council has resources of more than £109 million in aggregate for investment elsewhere in the city.

I am very sympathetic to the needs of Glasgow and believe that those allocations are tangible evidence of our commitment to regeneration in Glasgow. I should point out that it is open to the district to increase the resources available by encouraging more council house sales. Let me give an example. Since 1979, only 12·4 per cent. of Glasgow's council houses have been sold, compared with more than 20 per cent. in Scotland as a whole. Part of the reason for that lies in the fact that the council is taking about 12 months to process applications. Its average processing time for such sales amounts to more than 11 months. I regard that as quite unacceptable. Another example is the grudging reluctance of the council to meet——

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. I am answering the hon. Member for Govan, and there are many points to answer in the limited time available.

Our recent publicity campaign on rents into mortgages revealed that more than 20,000 tenants in Scotland were interested. Some 4,400 came from the Glasgow area, representing 23 per cent. of the Scottish total. The district council has produced a leaflet, mentioning that only two tenants from East Kilbride and eight from Glasgow have taken up the scheme. In fact, the latest figures show that 13 sales have been completed in East Kilbride and 19 in the Glasgow region of Scottish Homes. The latest figures show that there have been 249 applications from local authority tenants under the scheme—16 from Glasgow district council—and that a further 149 tenants from Glasgow have requested counselling visits. One thousand rents-to-mortgage sales in Glasgow would produce about £9 million of receipts for Glasgow district council, which it could spend on the rest of its public sector stock.

I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should call for the abolition of Scottish Homes. In only two years, it has established itself as a major vehicle for improvement and innovation in Scottish Housing. It has already invested nearly £600 million in Scotland's housing stock and plans over £300 million of expenditure in 1991-92. It is making a vital contribution to tackling housing needs in the areas with the worst problems in Scotland. It is responding to the aspirations of tenants who wish to exercise greater control over their housing through the formation of housing associations and co-operatives.

Scottish Homes' contribution in Glasgow has been considerable. It has given nearly £11 million in grant to housing associations in the Govan area in the past two financial years and expects to spend a further £4·8 million this year. In total, it expects to spend more than £82 million in the Glasgow area this year—an immense sum—yet the hon. Gentleman wishes to deprive his constituents of such support by abolishing Scottish Homes, thus halting projects that are in progress. He would do away with Scottish Homes in spite of the reality——

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No; I am answering the hon. Gentleman's question.

The hon. Gentleman would abolish Scottish Homes despite its great expertise, ability and the know-how which has been built up over the years and which it would be a tragedy to disrupt. The Central Govan and Talbot housing associations are undertaking work, with grants from Scottish Homes. A special needs programme of £1·2 million for mentally handicapped and elderly people in Govan will shortly be completed. With Scottish Homes' assistance, Linthouse housing association will also be converting Elder Cottage hospital in Govan to provide 22 sheltered housing units. In addition, Glasgow district council has come to strategic agreement with Scottish Homes, which will be in the interests of the hon. Gentleman's constituents and of Glasgow as a whole.

The hon. Gentleman appears to believe that writing off capital debt is like waving a magic wand, and that, by doing so, Glasgow's difficulties would be resolved. However, the costs associated with debt write-offs would, in Glasgow, involve expenditure of £976 million. That would have to be raised either through taxation or borrowing. It follows that any decision along those lines would have to be considered most carefully and would, of course, require legislation. We have no such proposals.

I do not believe that there is a case for writing off Glasgow's capital debt, and I shall say why. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, it amounts on average to £6,700 per house, which is well below the value of the housing stock on the basis of right-to-buy sales, which is about £19,000 per house. There is therefore no evidence that Glasgow's capital debt is excessive in relation to the capital value of the assets with which the debt is associated. The value of right-to-buy sales is about £10,000 per house, which is more than the average debt and, similarly, a rents-to-mortgage sale would produce about £9,000 which is, again, much more than the average debt.

In addition, because of the system of housing support grant through which the Government give assistance to those authorities that need it, there is no possibility of the district council defaulting on its loan payments. The Government provide substantial housing support grant to Glasgow. This year it amounts to £22·7 million, or £160 per council house. That represents 40 per cent. of the Scottish total of housing support grant, compared with Glasgow's share of Scotland's council house stock of less than 20 per cent. Since housing support grant was introduced, Glasgow has received a total of £386 million from the Government. Housing support grant is a deficit subsidy designed to fill the gap between estimated expenditure and estimated income.

The Grieve report also recommended the disposal of empty stock. If Glasgow cannot cope with the empty stock on its own, it should follow up possibilities with Scottish Homes and housing associations. Should vacant stock still be available, it would be possible to involve the private sector to an ever greater extent. I believe that such a policy would undoubtedly succeed.

I have listened carefully to the criticisms levelled by the hon. Member for Govan, but his claims are unfounded. This year we have made available more than £100 million to Glasgow district council to spend on its own stock. The council can use that substantial level of resources to tackle condensation and dampness, homelessness or other problems in Govan or elsewhere. It is right that the council should take its own view on priorities. Moreover, the council will benefit from the additional resources that we are making available for homelessness, energy efficiency and the urban partnership.

Resources for investment could be increased if the council were to take a more positive attitude towards the scope for right-to-buy and rents-to-mortgage sales. Its record on those is deplorable.

Scottish Homes has brought additional resources to Scottish housing and it has made a major contribution of £82 million to the Glasgow area—equivalent to literally millions in Govan. The hon. Member for Govan should express gratitude to those at Scottish Homes for working flat out at the sharp end of the housing problem for his constituents.

There is no case for writing off Glasgow's capital debt. The Government are providing more than £22 million in housing support grant to help tenants. We have increased spending on housing in real terms by 17 per cent. since 1979, whereas it fell by 35 per cent. under the previous Labour Government, which the hon. Member for Govan then supported.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fourteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 6 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 13 June.

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 13 June.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [13 May], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate further adjourned till Thursday 13 June.

Mr. Speaker: The remaining Bills have blocking motions. With the leave of the House, I shall put them together.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 3) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 13 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Local Government Finance

1. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently imprisoned for non-payment of the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Prison service central records do not show this information on a daily basis and may, therefore, be incomplete. But we are aware of three people currently in prison as a result of refusal to pay after a means inquiry established that they were able to pay their community charge.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) asked me to make a statement. My only statement can be that people who can pay, should pay.

Mr. Brown: Whatever the numbers, clearly those people are political prisoners—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Every hon. Member must put his question in his own way.

Mr. Brown: As I said, this is a political issue because yesterday at Margate, Mrs. Ruby Haddow was imprisoned, along with her husband, simply because she had not paid her poll tax. If that had happened in South Africa or eastern Europe there would have been a public outcry. It is disgraceful that there is no public outcry. More important, let us remember that that would not happen in Scotland because the law is different. It is a north-south issue. If we are talking about the Government being even-handed, why can people in England and Wales be gaoled when people in Scotland cannot? Surely it is now time for an amnesty for everyone who has not paid the poll tax, particularly for those in gaol.

Mr. Patten: Those who can pay, should pay, and that applies as much north of the border as south of the border. The hon. Gentleman might spend his time more profitably trying to persuade his local authority, Lothian regional council, which has a disgraceful record on collecting community charge payments, to do as well as Labour-controlled Fife region. South of the border, the hon. Gentleman might speak to a few Labour authorities, such as Lambeth, Newham and Islington, which failed to collect their community charge payments in exactly the same way as they failed to collect their rates.

Mr. Tracey: The figure that my right hon. Friend has given will be read with some interest. It is viewed with interest by me, because I drove past Wandsworth prison last weekend and saw a crowd of people protesting against such imprisonment. Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that there is and will be no question of an amnesty for those people who have not paid, because such failure to pay is viewed with disgust by all right-thinking members of society?

Mr. Patten: I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), whose question I welcome, that under a Conservative Government there is no possibility

whatever of any amnesty ever being declared for anyone who breaks the law. Rather than people waving banners outside Wandsworth prison, perhaps one day we shall see outside magistrates courts ordinary decent people who pay their community charge waving banners that say, "Those who can pay, should pay."

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that there are five such people in prison and that the sixth person was Mrs. Ruby Haddow of Ramsgate? She was the first woman to be gaoled for failure to pay and she is in Holloway. She has three daughters. Her only income is child benefit. Her husband came out of prison on Friday. He is an electrician and was made redundant in October last year. They have no income to pay the poll tax, yet she is serving 14 days and is being punished for her poverty. As not even I believe that this Government seriously contemplate gaoling the 16 million people who have not paid all of last year's poll tax, why do they not follow the logic of abolishing the poll tax and abolish the enforcement procedures that are putting people in prison for poverty?

Mr. Patten: No, certainly not. For people who do not pay their community charge bills, there is an exhaustive procedure which magistrates courts must follow and it includes a means inquiry. Courts alone decide who goes to gaol, not Ministers.

Burglaries

2. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the proportion of domestic burglaries which do not involve forced entry.

Mr. John Patten: In 1990, 26 per cent. of domestic burglaries in the Metropolitan police district involved no forced entry. Figures released today by the Metropolitan police show that that figure has increased. Comparable figures for the whole of England and Wales are not available for 1990, but 18 per cent. of burglary victims interviewed for the 1988 British Crime Survey said that their homes had not been left secure when they went out.

Mr. Brown: Does not that reply clearly show that people can do much to secure their homes? From the statistic that my right hon. Friend quoted, it seems that roughly one in four or five burglaries occurs as a result of the fault of the individual householder not securing the property. Is there not a way round that by giving much greater support to neighbourhood watch schemes? Is it not outrageous that some Labour local authorities refuse to allow neighbourhood watch scheme stickers and posters to be displayed on street furniture?

Mr. Patten: Alas, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I apologise, Mr. Speaker. I normally perform later at night when you are not in the Chair. Alas, Mr. Speaker, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is perfectly true that by joining a neighbourhood watch scheme and taking simple precautions, such as property marking and ensuring that good locks are fitted to doors, people can do a great deal to prevent burglary. It is impossible to make a home 100 per cent. safe, just as wearing a seat belt—something everyone should do—cannot make the wearer absolutely safe in a road accident. However, as my hon. Friend said, neighbourhood watch performs a valuable function. It is very sad that the Labour party nationally has not been able to persuade some Labour-controlled local councils, such as Cleveland, to take the neighbourhood watch movement and support of it more seriously.

Mr. Sheerman: The British public are sick to death of the Government trying to shuffle off responsibility for rising crime rates on to the victims. Of course there is an element of carelessness among the public and we want people to be more security conscious, but we have had 12 years of astounding rises in crime. The Government cannot shirk the responsibility for that or for underfunding crime prevention initiatives. Why do the Government not once in a while back the police instead of stopping the police doing their job—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] The police are crying out for resources to help neighbourhood watch, but will not get them from this Government.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman can do joined-up shouting, but he cannot do much joined-up thinking, as his question showed. When I gave him the opportunity, he lamentably failed to respond to my point about the need to talk to Labour authorities which do not back neighbourhood watch schemes. This Government have given more resources to the police than any other Government this century. There has been a 52 per cent. rise in resources for law and order under this Government. Finally with regard to crime prevention, according to the Labour party's policy document, Labour intends to give responsibility for crime prevention to local authorities. Tell that to the people of Lambeth and Liverpool.

Crime Prevention

3. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of crime prevention week.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The objective of crime prevention week was to raise national awareness of the need for positive crime prevention in our community. As such, we believe that it was successful. There were more than 6,000 local events involving many organisations and individuals and, I am glad to say, in many cases many young people. It attracted a great deal of positive press and broadcast cover.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate the staff of Crime Concern, an organisation located in my constituency, on their success in helping to organise the week? Will he also take this chance to congratulate the private sector, which responded in full measure to the call on its generosity to support the week? Will he ensure that Crime Concern continues to have the resources to enable it to do its important work?

Mr. Baker: Crime Concern has been a successful initiative undertaken by the Government. During crime prevention week it raised over £300,000. In addition, the Home Office secured support from businesses of over £1 million. Businesses throughout the country contibuted upwards of £5 million to support initiatives in schools, youth clubs and probation services. That is an involvement and commitment of business, with the police, in fighting crime.

Mrs. Mahon: Is the Secretary of State aware that during crime prevention week the crime prevention panel in Calderdale met? I have here the headline that resulted from that meeting. It says that there are 66 crimes every day in Calderdale. There has been a massive increase in every reportable crime. When will the Home Secretary fund West Yorkshire police force and the other police forces properly so that we can have community policemen and the public can be protected from such horror stories?

Mr. Baker: I remind the hon. Lady that in the past 12 years we have increased the resources of the police by more than any previous Government. The increase in expenditure has been some 53 per cent. We have increased the size of police forces in Britain by 27,000. We took over from a Government who held back police recruiting and who left a police force that was under establishment by several thousand.

Mr. Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if people were less careless and locked the doors of their houses and cars, crime figures would come down?

Mr. Baker: My hon. and learned Friend is right. The figures announced today and those that were announced earlier show that many burglaries take place on private property where doors and windows are unlocked and that in a quarter of all car crimes doors have been left unlocked. The obvious message is that people must look after their property better. That is a sensible message to put across.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary properly and rightly congratulated Crime Concern on its work. Neighbourhood watch is also important in the prevention of crime. Does the Home Secretary agree with Crime Concern that what is holding back neighbourhood watch is inadequate resources from the Home Office for the police?

Mr. Baker: There has been an increase to more than 19,000 neighbourhood watch schemes. I am glad to hear that the right hon. Gentleman is a late convert to them. I hope that he will ask all Labour authorities to put neighbourhood watch leaflets and pamphlets through doors and posters on street furniture. I sometimes wonder why the right hon. Gentleman is so half-hearted in his support for the forces of law and order.

Right to Silence

4. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to change the right to silence for an accused person.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The opportunities available for an accused person to state his position and how far the courts may draw proper inferences from his failure to take advantage of them will be among the matters to be considered by the royal commission on criminal justice and we should await its findings.

Mr. Riddick: May I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has set up the royal commission and that it will be able to consider this issue, especially as the police are becoming increasingly worried about the way in which criminals abuse the right to silence? Is it not the case that the right to silence helps suspects who have something to hide? Should not courts and juries be able to draw an inference from the fact that a defendant is not prepared to say what he was doing or where he was at a given time?

Mr. Baker: There are many views about the right to silence. Some representations that we have had claim that it should be kept as it is, but I agree with my hon. Friend that the police believe that the right to silence is being abused in certain cases. Courts cannot draw to the attention of the jury the fact that, in excercising his or her right to silence, the accused may not be answering any questions during the whole process of the investigation. Nor can the court make any comment on that. The royal commission will have to address those matters and I assure my hon. Friend that I shall draw his question to the attention of the royal commission.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Home Secretary accept that an abridgement of the right to silence would be an attack on the presumption of innocence which, for a very long time, has been the foundation of the criminal law and the protection of the individual in this country?

Mr. Baker: The royal commission must address that issue. There are two clear views about it—the hon. Gentleman's and that expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government should be deeply ashamed that although the right of silence in England has properly been subject to detailed scrutiny before any consideration has been given to taking it away, in Northern Ireland it was taken away without proper discussion or inquiry under the Order in Council procedure?

Mr. Baker: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland explained, the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 was introduced to meet the urgent and special circumstances of Northern Ireland. I agree with my hon. Friend that the issue must be considered, and it is right that the royal commission should do so.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Home Secretary recall that when the right to silence was modified in Northern Ireland under the legislation to which he referred, an undertaking was given that parallel legislation would be introduced speedily in England and Wales? Has any study been made of the effects of the modification of the right to silence in Northern Ireland? I am confident that if such a study were made, it would show that the modification has not had the alarmist effects that have been mentioned, but has proved to be a modest and useful measure. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the longer equivalent legislation for England and Wales is delayed, the more opportunity there will be for ill-intentioned people to suggest that some major, unacceptable change has been made in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Baker: We have certainly observed what has happened in Northern Ireland and I agree with the conclusion that the hon. Gentleman has drawn from the practice there. As I said, this is a matter for the royal commission and I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to its attention.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the 1967 royal commission report recommended the amendments that have now been made in Northern Ireland. His predecessor commissioned a report on the right to silence and possible alterations to it. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot wait for the commission's report and that it is time that victims of rape giving evidence in the Crown court should not be confronted with allegations of consent from an accused who refused to say anything in the police station when questioned six months earlier?

Mr. Baker: That is one aspect, and an example of the way in which the right to silence can be abused. Another is that the accused can simply stare at the wall and refuse to answer any questions of any sort for months on end, yet that fact cannot be drawn to the attention of the court. Those are matters of concern and are covered by the terms of the royal commission. I shall draw to its attention the views of my hon. Friend, who has taken a great interest in the matter for some years.

West Yorkshire Police

5. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to meet the chief constable of West Yorkshire police to discuss the reduction in the number of police officers in West Yorkshire.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): My right hon. Friend has no present plans to meet the chief constable.

Mr. Lofthouse: That is most regrettable. The Minister will be aware that to avoid being poll-tax capped, West Yorkshire police have fixed their budget in accordance with the tender criteria of the Department of the Environment. Is he aware that as a result, now, only two months into this financial year, there are vacancies for 66 police officers, 15 traffic wardens, 95 civilian staff and one assistant chief constable in that force and that those vacancies cannot be filled? It is anticipated that by the end of the financial year, there will be a staff shortage in that force of 500, both police and civilian. Considering the 27 per cent. increase in crime last year and an anticipated similar increase this year, surely the Home Secretary has an obligation to intervene and assist that authority in attempting to avoid a breakdown in law and order in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Lloyd: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my noble Friend the Minister responsible for the police gave the various metropolitan authorities written advice that they should maintain their police strength at the authorised establishment level. Even if the resultant budgets had then exceeded the provisional capping criteria, it would not have led to automatic capping. Each budget is examined on its merits and West Yorkshire would have been capped only if there were scope for savings or greater efficiency in other areas of its operation. That clear message was sent from my right hon. Friend with the full agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I am sorry that the West Yorkshire authority did not take heed of that advice.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that I have in my possession a letter from a superintendent of the West Yorkshire police, in which he says that staffing difficulties facing the police may have had a bearing on the difficulties that arose in the investigation of a crime referred to me in a complaint by a constituent? Is he further aware that the letter also states that unless action is taken to resolve the financial difficulties of West Yorkshire police as a matter or urgency, the situation can only get worse? Is it not indicative of the seriousness of the situation that a police superintendent puts such comments in a letter to a Member of Parliament? When will the Minister act on this issue and treat it as seriously as it deserves?

Mr. Lloyd: Obviously, I am not aware of that letter, as the hon. Gentleman did not send it to me. There may be cases in West Yorkshire where there are problems caused by a manpower shortage because the authority did not heed the advice of my right hon. Friend to bring the numbers up to the level of the establishment that he recommended.

Drugs

6. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives he intends to take with respect to drugs sales and abuse.

Mr. John Patten: As I announced last month, we will plough back drugs money confiscated here under international agreements into the fight against drug misuse. We intend to establish more local drug prevention teams, including teams in Salford and Manchester, as part of the drugs prevention initiative. The first priority of the new national criminal intelligence service is to be drugs.

Mr. Lloyd: In welcoming that statement, may I add that the ultimate victims of drugs in our society are not only those who use and abuse them, but communities whose areas are blighted by drugs and associated crime? Does the Minister accept that the view of many people in the areas that supply drugs is that drugs are not being given the priority that they should have by the Government and society in general? Even this week, the Secretary of State for Health told the House that drugs were not a priority for health initiatives. Will the Minister assure us that drugs are central to the Government's thinking and that they must have priority not only in the Home Office but throughout the Government, so that the attack on them is consistent and sustained? If drugs are not given such a priority we shall simply not begin to push back the scourge that they are causing in those communities.

Mr. Patten: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. I know of his long-standing interest in those issues, which he had the chance to discuss with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 30 April. We wish to do all we can to ensure that drugs policy has a proper standing in all Government Departments. I also want people in the Manchester area to be helped, which is why we intend to try to set up in the area one of our new drugs initiative teams concerned with prevention. However, that requires the co-operation of the local community, which I know concerns the hon. Gentleman. Any help that he can give me in working with local people to find the right place to put those drug prevention teams would be welcomed, and I shall be happy to discuss the issue with him.

Sir John Wheeler: Does my right hon. Friend recall that the Home Office initiated an international conference on drug prevention which resulted in many initiatives and improved the co-operation of the police and customs, not only within the United Kingdom but outside it? That, in turn, has led to an increase in drug seizures. Will not that welcome development in suppressing that evil trade benefit our residential communities?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is quite right. I saw the United Nations drugs commissioner, Signor Giacomelli this morning to discuss precisely these issues. What alarms him as much as it alarms me is the evidence of the increasing amounts of drugs—heroin, for example—coming from the Golden Crescent and reaching western Europe. We are also worried about the development of new routes—notably a Baltic route through the western USSR into the Baltic countries and thence into western Europe. This just shows how important international co-operation is.

Mr. Duffy: The Minister will know of my profound concern about drugs misuse, notably in South Yorkshire. I have conveyed that concern to the Home Department over many years and I am corresponding with the right hon. Gentleman about it. He will therefore understand my anxiety about the advance report of Judge Pickles' contribution to the BBC1 "Byline" series this coming Tuesday night, in which he is reported as saying that the struggle against drugs is now futile and has become hopeless. Has the Minister seen an advance report of Judge Pickles' remarks?

Mr. Patten: The learned judge has retired——

Mr. Duffy: Not yet; he retires next month.

Mr. Patten: In that case I had better bite my tongue and speak in generalities. Suffice it to say that I and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary regard legalising cannabis in this country as entirely wrong. It would be the single most damaging step that we could take to stoke up the fires of drug misuse among our young people and in our cities.

Prisons (Family Visits)

7. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to extend family visits in prisons.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: From 17 June, instead of one visit a month, prisoners will be entitled to two visits a month. At Holloway, mothers can now have all-day visits from their children at least once, and often twice a month. That has been very successful. We are encouraging other establishments, wherever possible, to set up similar schemes.

Sir Anthony Durant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that prisoners are often put in prisons a long way from their homes? Could that matter be looked at? Could they be put in prisons nearer their homes so as to assist visits from their families and help them to keep stable relationships with them?

Mr. Baker: Whenever possible, prisoners are placed as close to their families as possible. In some cases, particularly those of dangerous criminals, it is not possible. When I visited Reading prison in my hon. Friend's constituency, there were a large number of short-stay local prisoners. The same applies in nearby Oxford. In the Oxfordshire and Berkshire area, a new prison, Bullingdon, is being built. So my hon. Friend's part of the country is well covered in this respect, but I agree in principle with what he said.

Miss Lestor: First, I congratulate the Home Secretary on increasing the number of family visits and on the experiment in Holloway of bringing children into prison. Allowing them to spend time with their mothers is to be welcomed—if we are to continue to put women with children in prison, the success of which I doubt, but that is another matter. It is certainly a good move to allow them to have their children with them for longer periods.

I wish to stress the length of time that families spend travelling to visit prisoners. Many of my constituents—and, I am sure, many of the constituents of other hon. Members—will spend three quarters of the day trying to get to a prison for a very short visit and then have to drag their children back home again after spending very little time with the prisoner. However much the Home Office may be trying to ensure that prisoners are placed near their homes, it is by no means being successful.

Mr. Baker: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), we try to do that whenever we can, but it is not always possible. The hon. Lady knows, because she follows these matters, that assistance with travel costs can be obtained in certain circumstances.

I was grateful for the hon. Lady's welcome for the proposal, which is a sensible one, because when prisoners leave prison they have to resume their family responsibilities and they are often worried in prison about the break-up of their families. Anything that we can do to ease that problem is for the better.

Charities

8. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had towards implementation of the Woodfield report on charities.

Mr. John Patten: A wide range of charities and other interested bodies and individuals made helpful comments on the Woodfield report. The Government took account of those comments when preparing the 1989 White Paper and are continuing to do so in preparing forthcoming legislation.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Woodfield report, which addresses the proper administration of charities, has gathered dust for far too long? Does he further agree that recent allegations about misconduct in well-known charities does enormous damage and undermines the confidence and thus the generosity of the British people's charitable giving?

Mr. Patten: We want to sustain charitable giving in this country at its present record level. The British people are very generous, but my hon. Friend is right to say that nothing undermines that generous streak in the British character more than the fact that money is not reaching the right target or the right people or that political agitation is linked to charitable activity.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister confirm that the complaints against Oxfam are focused on its support for the use of sanctions against the apartheid system in South Africa and on its opposition to international support for the murderous Pol Pot who threatens a new holocaust in Cambodia? Why is it too political for charities to put the needs of the poor before self-serving power politics in the west?

Mr. Patten: That is not a matter for Ministers. Under British law it is entirely a matter for the charity commissioners.

Custody Time Limits

9. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposals for custody time limits.

11. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposals for custody time limits.

Mr. John Patten: Custody time limits have been introduced in stages following the successful pilot project in 1986. I am glad to announce today that we shall extend them by the end of this year throughout England and Wales.

Mr. Favell: That is very good news. My right hon. Friend may know that I am a lawyer. Within the privacy of these four walls I should like to let him into a lawyer's secret. No lawyer, whether he is a judge, a magistrates court clerk, a solicitor or a barrister, does today what can conveniently be put off until tomorrow. If they say that they cannot get the job done now, we should not believe them.

Mr. Patten: I shall treat my hon. Friend's information entirely confidentially. I note what he has said and I shall certainly not believe them.

Mr. Stevens: I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement. Does he agree that long periods of custody are undesirable not only because they cause uncertainty and difficulty for prisoners and their families, but because holding people on remand wastes prison service resources? There is also the cost of transferring prisoners between the prisons and the courts.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There is a great deal happening in addition to what I have announced. For example, 100 new bail information schemes and 1,000 new bail hostel places will come into being in the next year or so. My hon. Friend is right to imply that we should examine the technology and the economic feasibility of creating direct links between magistrates courts and remand centres in order to speed up remand hearings.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware that at the beginning of the week a prisoner from Frankland prison in my constituency, who is serving 14 years for armed robbery and for holding a prison officer hostage, was given a free pass for a private operation in a London hospital? He was allowed to go unescorted and has absconded. Will the Minister set up an inquiry to see what happened in that case and to ensure that it cannot happen again, because many of my constituents are deeply worried about it?

Mr. Patten: I understand and share the fears of the hon. Gentleman's constituents. I am advised by the Minister of State, Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), who is responsible for prison issues, that we are aware of the case and that an investigation is under way. I shall make entirely sure by letter that the hon. Gentleman is kept up to date with the progress of that inquiry.

Sunday Trading

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations he has received about reform of the law on Sunday trading.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Since my reply on 25 April to a question from the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), up to 4 June we had received some 150 further written representations broadly in favour of greater Sunday trading and some 130 against.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present situation is absolutely anarchical and makes it quite impossible for local authorities such as mine, the borough of Beverley, to enforce the law, whatever it may be at the moment? That being so, will my right hon. Friend tell the House when proposals will be brought forward for reform, bearing in mind that no one wishes the issue to be rushed?

Mr. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. I am sure that he is aware that I am conducting consultations with all the interested parties in the hope that it will be possible to find some measure of agreement between them and to bring proposals before the House. The measures that are brought forward will have to be agreed, workable and enforceable, and carry general support.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that part of the problem is that there are those who will not enforce the law, which leads to further discrediting of it? Is the right hon. Lady aware that many of us throughout the country want to maintain the peace and quietness of our Sabbath day?

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government take the view that the law should be enforced and we stand four square behind those who enforce it. There are many who prefer Sunday to be at least a different and special day.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that this Sunday about 60,000 shops will be open, many of them selling goods illegally? May I have an assurance that during the discussions my right hon. Friend will not give the "Keep Sunday Special" campaign a right of veto over Government policy?

Mrs. Rumbold: I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall give no one the right of veto over Government policy. It is a matter for the Government to decide and we are consulting to ensure that what ensues carries broad support throughout the country.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that there is concern about the extent of the law-breaking that is taking place? Is she aware also that recent court rulings have seriously weakened the enforcement powers of local authorities and

have made enforcement extremely risky? Will the right hon. Lady have a word with the Attorney-General with a view to encouraging him to use his extensive powers to restore law and order? I ask the right hon. Lady to do this without delay.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's comments. I am interested also to know whether the Labour party is moving towards some change in the Sunday trading laws. It is clear to me that the hon. Gentleman shares my view that matters need to be resolved and that the law must not continue to be broken. We must have a sensible resolution of these matters which is enforceable.

Immigration

12. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has been notified of any directives stemming from the EC which are designed to affect the way in which Her Majesty's Government controls and manages its admission and immigration policies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have not been notified of any such directive, though we are considering with our EC colleagues an intergovernmental convention on external frontiers. We have made the importance of our immigration frontier controls clear to our EC partners.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that a convention on the mutual recognition of visas could have devastating consequences on the ability of the United Kingdom Government to control entry into this country? Given the great importance of that, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful if hon. Members were told what was involved in the convention and had an opportunity to discuss it and vote on it before the Government agree to undermine our control of visitors?

Mr. Lloyd: The House will have an opportunity to know what is in the convention before the Government sign it. I emphasise that it deals not with entry for settlement but with short-term visitors. We are insisting on the safeguards that are necessary to ensure that our frontier controls are as effective as we know that they should be.

Mr. Darling: The Minister must know that there is a spate of proposals from Europe which will have a radical effect on frontier controls in Europe—including, possibly, the United Kingdom. More than that, the proposals will radically affect the right of certain people living in Europe, including the United Kingdom, to move around the EEC after 1992. Does he agree that a statement by the Home Secretary is essential and that there should be a debate in Government time so that all of us can have a chance to express our concerns and views before the Government reach a deal in secret on any intergovernmental convention or enter into any secret deals as a result of Trevi or Schengen discussions? Will the Minister give the undertaking for which I have asked? If he does not, he can be assured that there will be a great deal of concern both inside and outside the House.

Mr. Lloyd: It would be silly to have such a debate until the Government have a clear view of what is on offer and know what they think that they can sign. The hon. Gentleman is quite right—there are a number of issues under consideration. They deal with the visitors from outside the Community, not those coming for settlement, and with easier movement of those from the minorities settled in EC countries who wish to move around the Community. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, and even his noisy hon. Friends, would support that.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

Mr. Banks: Will the Prime Minister join me in sending best wishes to Prince William for a complete recovery—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] That is the nice bit——

Mr. Speaker: And it is just about in order.

Mr. Banks: Did the Prime Minister see the article in yesterday's *Daily Mirror*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question is the ration.

Mr. Banks: Did the Prime Minister see the article in yesterday's *Daily Mirror* stating that the scanner used on the prince at the Royal Berkshire hospital was bought from the proceeds of jumble sales and sponsored walks? Is the Prime Minister aware that the ambulance which brought the prince to London was from a service that is actually breaking down in Greater London and that Great Ormond Street hospital, which looked after the prince so well, is turning away sick children because of the pressures on its services and has been kept open only by public begging? What sort of society is it that can find all the money in the world for weapons of death and destruction, but when it comes to keeping hospital wards open and buying vital medical equipment, has to use sponsored runs, flag days and jumble sales?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the whole House and the country will join the hon. Gentleman in sending best wishes to Prince William. We all hope that he will make a full recovery as speedily as possible.

The Government found £33,000 million for the national health service, which is four times as much in cash terms as any previous Government have ever found. The private collections and private donations which go towards providing equipment such as scanners show, above all that the people of this country, including the Conservative party—in fact, often led by those in the Conservative party—care sufficiently for the national health service to cherish it and provide extra resources for it.

Q2. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: My right hon. Friend is aware of the tremendous support among Conservative Members for his views on economic and monetary union—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Come on, please.

Mr. Gill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those same views, clearly articulated by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor last week and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on the "Today" programme this week, command the support of the majority of British voters, as evidenced by a recent opinion poll showing that 63 per cent. oppose the single currency?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right about that. It is becoming increasingly recognised in this country and the Community that moves towards economic and monetary union which did not reflect proper convergence would be damaging, not only for this country, but for the whole of the Economic Community. That has been our position since the beginning of the negotiations and it remains our position, together with our constant intention to preserve the prerogatives of this House.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us what in concrete terms he intends to do to ensure that further harm does not come to small businesses as a result of the high interest rates being imposed upon them?

The Prime Minister: The principal damage and difficulty that small firms have faced in recent years has been the collapse of demand not only in Britain but abroad as a result of a general downturn in trade and inflationary problems. Inflation is now falling rapidly, and that is a matter of the greatest concrete concern to small businesses, as they have repeatedly testified.

Mr. Kinnock: It is obvious from that answer that the Prime Minister is not going to do anything in concrete terms. Is it not obvious that high interest rates are the policy of the Government and that the banks' behaviour is the result of financial deregulation, also the policy of the Government? Why does not the Prime Minister change the policies, as he should, or will he remain the betrayer of small businesses?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman, having other things on his mind, has clearly not noticed that inflation is falling rapidly and that interest rates have fallen by 3·5 per cent. in recent months. That will make a dramatic difference to individuals' prospects and, most particularly, to prospects for small and large firms.

Mr. Kinnock: Small businesses which used to have arrangements to pay 3 per cent. above base rate on their overdraft facilities are now paying as much as 17 per cent. —*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, they are. Conservative Members should talk to some of the people who run the businesses which are paying that kind of money. How can such huge charges contribute to fighting inflation or to sustaining the small business sector?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will have heard the gasp of frank disbelief at what he said a few moments ago. I hope that he will provide clear illustrations, not an isolated example, of what he has just said. What is necessary for the future health of Britain is, first, to ensure that we bring inflation down to a low level; secondly, to keep it there; and, thirdly, so as to ensure that that happens, never again to have a Labour Government.

Sir John Wheeler: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to read about the dreadful events taking place in Labour-controlled Hackney—*[Interruption.]*—where council officials have been racketeering on the backs of the homeless and illegally renting out properties? *[Interruption.]* Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a scandal, and will he condemn the empty properties that Hackney, Lambeth, Islington and Liverpool have that could be brought into use?

The Prime Minister: In so far as I could hear the question over the chanting from Opposition Members, I believe that it concerned Hackney borough council. Anyone who wanted an example of the Labour party in power could only have seen it in recent years in local government in places such as Hackney, and I do not believe that they will have liked what they have seen. Labour repeatedly feigns concern for the homeless, but Hackney has more than 2,000 properties empty.

Q3. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Reverting to the important question of a single European currency, has the Prime Minister yet had a chance to study the important speech made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) last night? Am I right in thinking that the Prime Minister's personal opinion is that a single currency may be a good thing eventually, but not yet and not for the foreseeable future? Does he not think that that "yes-maybe" approach to the question is now so hedged about and qualified as to be almost devoid of any meaning? When will he come to the House and tell the country what he thinks is the right course of action for Britain to take in this fundamentally important economic issue?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly has not been listening over the past two years, because we have done it repeatedly. We have made it plain to the House and to our European partners that we cannot accept any changes to the treaty of Rome which would bind us to a single currency or a single monetary policy without a separate decision by this party, by this Government and by this Parliament.

Q4. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholson: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member who represents the constituency where I was educated—the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—on exercising his right of parental choice under the Education Reform Act 1988——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must relate to the Prime Minister's responsibility. He has no responsibility for that.

Mr. Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that parental choice in schools is a major Conservative policy,

and would it not help if more senior members of the Opposition parties joined Conservatives in supporting parental freedom of choice?

The Prime Minister: I am always pleased to see support for Conservative reforms, especially from Labour Front Benchers. I wish that they would not say one thing in opposition and practise something else in there own lives.

Q5. **Mrs. Irene Adams:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Adams: The question that I am going to put to the Prime Minister is a simple one and it has been put to him twice at Prime Minister's questions in the past few weeks, but he has refused to answer it. Following his last refusal, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the hon. Lady, who is new to us, that preambles take up much time? Will she ask a question, please?

Mrs. Adams: Is the Prime Minister aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutherglen wrote to him putting that question yet again? He is still awaiting a reply. Will the Prime Minister answer today, because the question deserves a serious answer—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the hon. Lady a chance to ask her question—please.

Mrs. Adams: If the Conservatives should win the next general election, will the Prime Minister give an absolute guarantee that he will not raise value added tax—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: When the Conservative party has won the next general election, the hon. Lady will see, and will perhaps have learnt by then, that no Government at any stage give categorical assurances—none have, and none will. But I can say to the hon. Lady that we have no present plans whatsoever to increase value added tax.

Mr. Moss: Has my right hon. Friend had time to read a report published yesterday by the respected City firm, Goldman Sachs, which concludes that a minimum wage policy would destroy jobs, increase inflation and lead to a reduction in output? Does he agree that it is totally irresponsible of the Labour party to continue peddling that policy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have seen that report and it shares the views of the Government, the Fabian Society and many others. A minimum wage would have devastating effects for people. It would encourage others to seek to raise the general level of wages. It would raise inflation and unemployment, and a National Institute estimate—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should listen, because this would affect people and their jobs, about whom they claim to care. The institute estimates that a statutory minimum wage would raise price levels by 3·5 per cent. at the end of three years, and would reduce the level of gross domestic product by 0·5 per cent. That is the likely cost of a Labour Government.

Q6. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Why have not the problems of a minimum wage that the Prime Minister just outlined caused difficulties in West Germany?

The Prime Minister *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I was unable to hear the hon. Gentleman's question over the noise being made by Opposition Members. If you, Mr. Speaker, will allow the hon. Gentleman to repeat his question, I shall endeavour to respond to it.

Mr. Bennett: I asked why the problems of a minimum wage that the Prime Minister outlined have not been evident in West Germany.

The Prime Minister: West Germany has in no sense in recent years had many of the attendant difficulties created by trade unions and others—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is now a stack of people, the Fabian Society—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: We have seen the way the Opposition behave and it is not unlike Hackney borough council writ large.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us what will be the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Yes, Sir.

The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 10 JUNE—Timetable motion, followed by proceedings on the Dangerous Dogs Bill.

TUESDAY 11 JUNE—Progress in Committee of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill.

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE—Conclusion of Committee and remaining stages of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill.

THURSDAY 13 JUNE—Opposition Day (13th allotted day).

There will be a debate on an Opposition motion described as "The Impact of the Government's Recessionary Policies on Business".

FRIDAY 14 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 17 JUNE—Committee and remaining stages of the Armed Forces Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 12 June to consider Document No. 6033/90, relating to supplementary protection certificates for medicinal products.

[Relevant documents:
Wednesday 12 June
European Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community Document
6033/90 Medicinal Products (Legal Protection)
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
HC 11-xxv (1989-90) and HC 29-xxii (1990-91)]

Dr. Cunningham: Why are the Government introducing a timetable motion on the Bill to control dangerous dogs, which the Opposition do not intend to oppose? Is it not a ridiculous state of affairs that the Government want to guillotine the debate on a Bill which, broadly speaking and in principle, the Opposition welcome? That will force debate and decisions on the Bill into the middle of the night and early hours of the morning when, with proper agreement across the Floor, the House could have a far more sensible debate on that very important problem—and almost certainly reach far more sensible decisions. It must be unprecedented for a Government to cut short debate on a Bill that the Opposition support in principle. Is not the Government's real problem that they want to timetable the Bill to prevent their own supporters from causing difficulties when they rightly intend to vote for a dog registration scheme—which we will certainly support, and which, as all the evidence shows, has the overwhelming support of the public.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Why did not the Opposition support one in the past?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman, who bellows at me from a sedentary position, must have a short memory. We have consistently supported a dog registration scheme, and we will do so again.

I invite the Leader of the House to arrange with the Government Chief Whip a free vote on that issue—with which we would also co-operate—to ensure that the House genuinely reaches an honest decision on whether Britain should have a dog registration scheme.

I know that the Leader of the House has not been able to find time for a debate about European Community affairs next week. May I impress on him the urgent need for such a debate, given the important developments that we have seen throughout Europe—not just in the Community? Can the debate be held before the European summit that is to take place in Luxembourg towards the end of the month? I believe that there would be widespread support for it. Given the current interest in European developments among Conservative Members, I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will want to satisfy the wishes of his right hon. and hon. Friends as well as helping the Opposition.

Why are we to spend next week debating yet another Local Government Finance Bill, which, by definition, will perpetuate the existence of the poll tax for another two or three years? Why cannot a proposal to abolish the poll tax immediately be embodied in a simple clause, or group of clauses? The Opposition would co-operate fully in order to remove this abysmal, capricious tax from the statute book at the earliest opportunity.

When do the Government intend to arrange a debate on their own White Paper on the environment, "Our Common Inheritance", which was published with great fanfares nine months ago but has now disappeared without trace? Are the Government now putting important decisions about environmental policy on the back shelf because the environment is no longer considered to be politically opportune or fashionable? A debate on the White Paper would be in the interests of the House and the country.

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that the House and the whole country think it important for us to put the Dangerous Dogs Bill on the statute book as quickly as possible—

Dr. Cunningham: We have already co-operated to accelerate its progress.

Mr. MacGregor: I am explaining why we are tabling a timetable motion. It is important to get the Bill on the statute book, not only to protect innocent people who may be subjected to the behaviour of fighting dogs but to ensure that the breeding of such dogs is stopped so that matters go no further. I believe that, if we are to do that as quickly as possible, it will be necessary to take the Bill through the House in the way that the Government suggest. I also believe that that is what the House wants.

If the Opposition do not wish to oppose the Bill, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said—and I was very pleased to hear him say it—they will no doubt assist us in accelerating the debate. We are taking steps to ensure that the Bill gets through, but—as hon. Members will see when the timetable motion is tabled later this afternoon—we are allowing as much time as possible for the Bill to be debated on the one day allotted to it. I think that the House will want to get it through in a day, and the guillotine motion will ensure that that happens.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are allowing plenty of time for sensible debate. Let me point out that we shall have even more time if we debate the guillotine motion briefly: then we can get on to the Bill quickly. That would

suit me as much as it would suit the hon. Gentleman. He will see when he reads the motion that we are allowing plenty of time for debate on the dog registration issue.

I agree that Europe is a very important subject, and I hope to arrange a debate in the near future. I assure the hon. Gentleman that it will take place before the European summit in Luxembourg. I am not sure that I am helping the Opposition in arranging the debate, as it will certainly expose the divisions in their ranks, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the need for it.

The reason why we have not introduced a single clause to this effect in the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, is that it would then be necessary to replace the community charge with an alternative system. The council tax that we propose deals, in a way that the Opposition's proposals would not, with all—or virtually all—the defects of both the old domestic rating system and the community charge. I defy the Opposition to propose a single clause to cover all the alternatives to the community charge.

Dr. Cunningham: I did not say that.

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman did not say that, he is demonstrating once again his naivety by suggesting that we can leave in limbo the question of local government finance. It was ridiculous to suggest a single clause.

As for the White Paper on the environment, the hon. Gentleman will know that we have frequently discussed environmental matters in the House and have pursued many of the action proposals in the White Paper, which are being followed up. I hope to be able to arrange a debate on the environment because I agree that it is an important subject. I should be only too delighted to have a progress report on all that has been done to follow up the White Paper, but there is a difficulty in fitting it in, given the fact that we have a heavy legislative programme.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Would my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on homelessness in London? Is he aware that today there are more than 20,000 vacant council houses in London, which represents 20 houses for every person sleeping rough in London tonight? Is that not a scandal on which we should have another debate?

Mr. MacGregor: Certainly I think that other reports have drawn attention to the fact that a number of Labour authorities have many vacant houses which have remained vacant for a long time. I agree that it is right that attention should be drawn to that fact.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Where does the Leader of the House expect any opposition to the Dangerous Dogs Bill to come from? Does he not think imposing a guillotine means there is more chance of us getting the legislation wrong than if proper consideration were allowed?

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, his right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor introduced important provisions earlier this week for civil legal aid, which seem to restrict greatly the right of ordinary citizens to appear before the courts. When will the House have an opportunity to debate those proposals?

Mr. MacGregor: Let me be clear on the first point. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that the House will agree and that the Bill will go through quickly, that will be ideal and admirable, and it is what I should like to see happen. However, there are quite a number of amendments to the Bill, so we want a proper timetable to get it through as quickly as possible, because we all agree that it is urgent.

The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways—he cannot say that we do not need a timetable to ensure that the Bill is properly considered and also say that it will go through quickly. We are trying to get the Bill through the House as quickly as possible, concomitant with sufficient debate to get it right. I believe that we have it right, but it is right to allow time for the amendments to be discussed.

As far as the Lord Chancellor's consultation paper is concerned, the hon. Gentleman will know that the Lord Chancellor has made it clear that he has an open mind especially on the main option but also on others canvassed in the paper, and has allowed until 31 October for consultation. We have a crowded programme, so I do not know at this stage whether we shall have the opportunity to have a debate in the House before the end of the consultation period or afterwards, but I note the hon. Gentleman's request.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that, when he carries through the experiment that he announced in written questions yesterday dealing with the Procedure Committee's recommendations on Lords amendments, which one hopes will make it simpler for the House to carry through and understand the way in which Lords amendments are dealt with, there is a notice on the Order Paper so that hon. Members have the new procedure drawn to their attention? Perhaps the House would attend during the Lords amendments to ensure that the new procedure works to their benefit.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and to his Committee for the proposals for dealing with Lords amendments. I am also grateful for the opportunity to draw to the House's attention the written answer which shows how we propose to proceed. At this stage, it is still experimental, and in a sense it is a dummy run to see whether the suggestions by my hon. Friend's Committee will benefit the House and be advantageous in considering Lords amendments. Once again, it is an example of the constructive work done by my hon. Friend's Committee; I pay tribute to him and make it clear that, once again, the Government are responding positively.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): On the question of an early end to the poll tax, is the Leader of the House aware that my constituents who, I think are fairly typical, are now complaining because they are confused and misunderstand the different schemes to rebate the poll tax and subtract £140——to such an extent that the council in Oldham is now receiving complaints at twice last year's level? That is likely to continue until the poll tax is ended.

Is there not some way in which we could debate bringing forward the ending of the poll tax? At least that would help the Government, if nothing else.

Mr. MacGregor: There is absolutely no confusion about the switch of the £140 from which the hon. Gentleman's constituents are greatly benefiting. I hope that he will draw to their attention the benefits that they are getting from it.

[Mr. MacGregor]

On our alternative—the council tax—as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are consulting for just over another week. The Government will then come forward with proposals. We are moving very fast on this matter—as fast as is practicable. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the proposals that we shall make are much more beneficial to his constituents than the proposals of his own party.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement next week on the plight of those British subjects whose careers were shattered and possessions plundered during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait? Will he ask his ministerial colleagues to consider whether it would be fair to compensate them out of the Iraqi assets that are frozen in this country?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise a debate on the point that my hon. Friend raises, but I will certainly draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If we can prove conclusively that the Iraqi Government have breached United Nations resolution 688 and have resumed oppression against the Kurdish peoples, would that be sufficient to warrant a statement from a Minister?

Mr. MacGregor: There is no evidence that there is any systematic or widespread repression of the Kurds at present. We are in close contact with other joint force members to agree ways of providing reassurance to the Kurdish population if and when forces are withdrawn.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I wanted to make that point absolutely clear. On his hypothesis, clearly in that situation we would obviously consider making a statement to the House, and I can give him that assurance.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Given that plans are afoot for the imposition of an expensive additional layer of regional government, which in our case would be run from Newcastle, not Teesside, and given that the development corporations and many of the Government's presently active inner-city initiatives will be scrapped, would it be possible for us at an early opportunity to debate the Labour party's proposals for the northern region and other English regions?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early opportunity in Government time, but I am sure that he will be able to find opportunities in the House for making the cogent criticisms that I am sure he would wish to develop.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Given the Prime Minister's stated wish to raise the political profile of Edinburgh by holding a European Community meeting there, why is the Leader of the House undermining that wish by not holding even one Scottish Grand Committee meeting in Scotland's capital city?

Mr. MacGregor: I know that several Scottish Grand Committee meetings are coming forward in the immediate future—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not in Edinburgh."] That is a matter that I would obviously have to look at.

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): My right hon. Friend will know that the Secretary of State for Defence made a far-reaching and important statement on the future of the armed forces, particularly as regards the size of the Army. That will affect many of our constituents. Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that we will be able to debate that matter well before the White Paper is introduced, so that we can put our concerns to the Secretary of State and also show up the disastrous review that took place in the 1970s and 1960s when the Labour party was in power?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot give my hon. Friend an absolute assurance as to the exact timing of any debate, because there is a great deal to be fitted into the programme at the moment, but I can assure him that there will be a number of occasions in the comparatively near future when we will be able to debate these matters.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House make a statement next week on the rules governing Ministers—which, as he knows, are based on the principle that Ministers should order their affairs so that there is no conflict between their public duty and their private interests? Will he make a statement about the four Cabinet members who are members of Lloyd's, at a time when Lloyd's members are organising a campaign to obtain tax concessions which will directly benefit Lloyd's members, including the four members of the Cabinet? How can that conflict of interest be maintained? Will the right hon. Gentleman make a statement making it clear that Ministers should divest themselves of those private financial interests?

Mr. MacGregor: The rules relating to Ministers' interests are very clear and, I am sure, are being wholly abided by. I do not see any need for a statement on that matter next week.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Earlier this week, I may have inadvertently misled the House when I referred to changes in the rules relating to people who suffer from diabetes which seem to have been introduced by an order without any debate or discussion in the House. I distinctly remember the announcement that those who suffer from diabetes would receive their medication free. Earlier, I misled the House into believing that those who suffer from diabetes but do not take medicine as their diabetes is controlled by diet would no longer receive their medication, testing equipment and other things free of charge. I have since learnt that the position is worse than that. Only those on insulin will have their medication free. The House and the country have been misled. There should be a statement in the House at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not know about that matter, so I will have to discuss it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that Question 13 to the Home Secretary was not reached? Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement about free television licences for old-age pensioners? It must be wrong for old-age pensioners on one side of the street to receive free television licences while those on the other side of the street do not. Some pensioners in the same warden accommodation do not

qualify for free television licences while others do. Some pensioners who have been in such accommodation for five years qualify, while those who have only just arrived do not. The Prime Minister talks about a classless society. Let us see that put into practice and have less talk. There should be free television licences for all old-age pensioners.

Mr. MacGregor: I did not notice that Question 13 had not been reached, but I assume that it was tabled by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and that he has just found a way of making his point to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, that is not the correct use of business questions. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bolsover will, with his usual persistence, table his question again.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): In the light of the interesting speech by Mikhail Gorbachev in association with his Nobel prize, would it be possible next week or the week after to debate the bipartisan amendment to early-day motion 891, which is linked to the plea that the British dependants Maria and Anna Gordievsky and their mother Leila should be allowed to join their father in this country after being separated for six years? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is the best way to show that there is a new USSR and not one that is still controlled by the KGB?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot arrange a debate on that in Government time next week. However, in relation to early-day motion 891, the Government welcome the programme link-up between the United Kingdom and Soviet Parliaments broadcast on 5 June. We entirely agree that the Gordievsky family should be allowed to be reunited in Britain without any further delay.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In view of the mounting concern in Britain about what could happen to the Kurds if the allies decide to leave northern Iraq, surely it is necessary for the Foreign Secretary to make a statement to at least tell us the allies' intentions? Do the allies intend to leave or not? Why should the Kurds be at the tender mercy of Saddam Hussein and his thugs? We need a statement as quickly as possible so that we can know precisely what the allies intend to do.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said something about that in reply to an earlier question. I will convey the hon. Gentleman's views to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. As I said earlier, no doubt at an appropriate time, information will be made available to the House.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): As the former and very successful Minister for small businesses, will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate at the earliest opportunity on the conditions of bank lending to smaller firms? My right hon. Friend will agree that it is not an issue that can be dealt with sensibly in superficial questions at Question Time. It is a deep subject. It is not an easy matter, but it would be right for the House to debate it at this time.

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, I yield to no one in my enthusiasm for encouraging and helping small businesses. He and I have done many things together in that regard. He will be aware of the comments that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made on Tuesday on the matter and of the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is having at present. I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate on the matter next week, but I continue to take a close interest in everything to do with small businesses. At an appropriate time, I should be delighted to have a debate on the subject.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The Leader of the House knows that the Government's response to the Procedure Committee's report on Select Committees places the status of the Comptroller and Auditor General in jeopardy. Why did the Leader of the House allow that response to be published when clearly it had not been thought through? When will he make a statment on the subject?

Mr. MacGregor: It was thought through. I know that there are different views in the House, but the Government's position on the matter was thought through. I discussed it with several people. I hope to be able to introduce new Standing Orders on some aspects of the report—those on which it is for the Government to act—shortly.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Does not my right hon. Friend recall that this Parliament of all Parliaments has imposed more curtailments of free speech through the device of the guillotine? The sophistry that my right hon. Friend wove in responding to the Liberal spokesman, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), did not address the question why, when the House seems to accept that the curtailment of dogs with dangerous tendencies for the sake of the general public has great support in the country, the Government whom I support insist on imposing yet another of these wretched guillotines to deny free speech. Does not my right hon. Friend remember that we legislate in haste and repent at leisure?

Mr. MacGregor: It is because I believe that many people in the House, as in the country, want us to take action on the matter as quickly as possible. If my hon. Friend is right that there is agreement, clearly we shall get the Bill through well within the terms that we have set down in the guillotine.

Mr. Cryer: Not without proper debate.

Mr. MacGregor: If there is general agreement, that is what will happen. If, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) seems to suggest, there is great opposition to the Bill, that makes it desirable to put the Bill through quickly. In the timetable motion we shall allow plenty of time for what is after all a short Bill, which the whole House apparently supports. We shall allow plenty of time for the issues to be debated.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a short debate to deal with the traumatic problem faced by the families of Scottish people who have been found dead or murdered on the streets of London? The families are having immense problems in bringing the body back home so that they can deal with it in their own fashion. Will the Leader of the House ensure that the Home Secretary knows about the problem and can help prevent Scottish families from suffering such a traumatic problem?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that, if the hon. Gentleman has a particular case in mind, he will bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who will examine it immediately.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Can my right hon. Friend provide an early opportunity to debate the minimum import price into the European Community of raspberries? *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members find it amusing, but Tayside in Scotland grows more than 80 per cent. of the raspberries grown commercially within the European Community. That product is at risk, because the minimum import price runs out at the end of July, in the middle of the picking season. It must be extended and the European Community must be made to realise that the industry, which receives no public support and is a great asset to Scotland and the United Kingdom, could be put at risk. We will not accept the minimum import price being negotiated away to allow eastern European imports into the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: I know well, knowing that part of Scotland well, of the importance of that industry to that part of Scotland. When I was Minister of Agriculture, I had on a number of occasions at this time of year to deal with the alleged dumping of raspberries, when the real difficulty was getting the evidence. I assure my hon. Friend that a great deal of attention is paid to the issue. I am sure that he has already drawn the matter to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and I shall do so as well.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Some months ago, I raised with the Leader of the House the question of British hostages. At that time I reminded him that, rightly, diplomatic activity should have considerable priority. As no progress seems evident, will the right hon. Gentleman find time for a debate so that our voice may be heard? Alternatively, will he arrange for a statement to be made to update the House on what is happening?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman will know of the considerable efforts in relation to hostages that the British Government, in particular Ministers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have been making. In connection with one group, the Minister of State at that Department hopes to make a visit soon. I assure the hon. Gentleman that constant efforts are being made. If and when it is appropriate to make a statement, I shall make sure that one is made.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): May we have a debate in the near future on the progress of the talks in Northern Ireland? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time for the House to show its total support for the efforts that are being made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland? That would show those who are at present involved in slaughter in Northern Ireland that hon. Members in all parts of the House and people throughout the country, in every constitutional party, are in favour of reaching some sort of accommodation. That message should be spelled out clearly by the House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend, and the whole House will welcome the news that agreement has now been reached on the outstanding procedural points and that the four political parties taking part in the talks have decided to begin plenary sessions on 17 June. We hope that the painstaking preparatory work conducted during the last five weeks—I pay warm tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in that respect—will have laid a firm foundation for substantive negotiations. There will be other opportunities before the House rises, not only during Question Time, to discuss Northern Ireland issues.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we please have a debate on the 17th report of the Committee of Public Accounts entitled "National Health Service: Patient Transport Services"? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that Committee unanimously considered it unacceptable that many services in our major cities are not meeting the minimum emergency standards? Does he know that, in many cities, such as Leicester, the ambulance services are overworked and are having the greatest difficulty meeting the needs imposed on them by a growing and aging population? When shall we debate that other defect in the national health service?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there are procedures for dealing with Public Accounts Committee debates and for selecting the topics. I cannot tell him at this stage when the next debate will be.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Apart from the important question of principle raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), may I ask my right hon. Friend to explain what possible excuse there can be for guillotining a Bill that the whole House supports?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that the need is for speed. We are giving a great deal of time for the Bill to be dealt with, and if there is such great agreement, perhaps we shall finish the debate well within the timing of the guillotine.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a statement to be made by the Government about the serious situation facing Post Office Counters, where management are refusing to go to arbitration to settle a serious dispute on the basis of a 7 per cent. pay offer which is way below the operative retail prices index, and which represents a 1.2 per cent. cut in living standards? Is he further aware that it is the lowest public sector pay offer at present under way? Do the Government agree with the management in making that offer, when another public sector worker, the Governor of the Bank of England, has received a 17 per cent. pay offer, repressenting an increase of £22,500, which is double the rates of maximum pay received in a whole year by a Post Office Counters worker?

Mr. MacGregor: Those are matters for Post Office Counters management and the unions. I see no opportunity for a debate next week.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House consider an urgent debate on the re-emergence and growth of Militant Tendency within the Labour movement and the Labour party so that we can demonstrate to the British people that the Labour party have not been successful, in any whit, regard or particular, in eliminating that problem from the ranks of the Labour party and the Labour movement?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. Other events, including a by-election, may show that Militant Tendency is still alive and kicking in the Labour party. However, my hon. Friend must find other opportunities —as I am sure he will—to raise the matter next week.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange a debate on Gibraltar before the summer recess so that the House can discuss the worrying harassment of British citizens by the Spanish at the border crossing? We could then also consider the controversial Brussels agreement—the ill-conceived airport agreement —which is doing much to wreck the potential commercial viability of the colony, and the European Community dimension as it affects Gibraltar.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a debate specifically on that issue. But he mentioned the European Community dimension and, as I have already told the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I hope very soon to announce a debate on European matters, at which that subject could be raised.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): For some months now, hon. Members on both sides of the House have been asking for a debate on the "Options for Change" implications for the Navy, particularly naval bases. My right hon. Friend will know of my concern and that of my constituents who are based in the royal naval base in Portland, the research establishments and sea systems controllerate. Will he organise a statement from the Secretary of State for Defence next week to tell us what is going on—I understand that decisions have already been made—and an early debate so that we can discuss how we should organise our Navy in the 1990s and the year 2000?

Mr. MacGregor: It is unlikely that there will be a statement next week, but I shall look into the matter and discuss it with my right hon. Friend. There will be opportunities in the coming weeks to debate service matters further.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): During Tuesday's debate, will the Secretary of State for the Environment make a public confession that, according to recent parliamentary replies on local government statistics, the total cost of administering and collecting the poll tax is now well over £1,000 million? That makes the poll tax one of the biggest and most expensive blunders in the history of any Government. If local councillors were responsible for misspending even a tiny fraction of that amount, they would be surcharged and banned from office. Does the Leader of the House agree that the entire Cabinet should be collectively surcharged and that the people should now have the opportunity to kick them out of office?

Mr. MacGregor: That will not be relevant to Tuesday's debate. Without question, one of the causes of the greatest uproar and grievance to the public is the fact that some people have not paid their community charge.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is it not an alarming fact that the number of foreign citizens now claiming political asylum in this country, and therefore being allowed to remain for up to four years, has risen from 100 a week to 1,000 a week? Is not the pressure that is now building up on housing, social security and education in the areas of London in which those people must be settled so great that it is threatening to undermine the social fabric of the region? Will my right hon. Friend consider an early debate or, failing that, a statement from the Home Secretary about how we could restrain, sensibly and with good judgment, that breakaway activity, which is threatening to become worse?

Mr. MacGregor: I fully recognise the importance of the point that my hon. and learned Friend raises, and I shall discuss with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary when it might be discussed in the House.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on the decision by the Export Credits Guarantee Department to withdraw support from many countries, including the Soviet Union? Is he aware that Germany, by contrast, is increasing support to the Soviet Union, thus helping the long-term interests of its industry? Is it not time the Government started helping manufacturing instead of harming it?

Mr. MacGregor: We offer a great deal of assistance for exports, as the hon. Lady knows, and large sums are involved. She could pursue this matter at Question Time with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, when I am sure he will give a robust response.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will there be time next week to debate what is happening in the city of Liverpool, which is a matter of great concern if not to Members on both sides of the House at least to Conservative Members—my elderly mother, for example, still insists on living there? The rubbish is piling up on the streets, the buses are not running, council staff are on strike, and the Labour party in control seems completely to have lost its head when it comes to trying to run Militant out of town—it seems to be failing. Opposition Members who represent the city will not raise the issue; one or two of them are part of the problem; and the Liberal Member does not appear to have raised the issue. So it looks as though we shall have to raise it, and I beg my right hon. Friend to give us the opportunity to debate it.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that one of the reasons why Opposition Members do not raise the matter is that they are part of the problem. It is clear that Militant Tendency is still very alive in Liverpool—as we shall see shortly. I must leave it to my hon. Friend—as she has done effectively this afternoon —to draw attention to these matters in the House and elsewhere.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I again draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the case of Mr. Karamjit Singh Chahal, whose plight is outlined in early-day motion 828?

[That this House expresses concern that Karamjit Singh Chahal, a British citizen settled in the United Kingdom since 1974, has been detained in Bedford Prison since August 1990; notes Mr. Chahal is detained subject to a notice of the Secretary of State's decision to make a deportation order under section 3(5)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971 for reasons of national security and other reasons of a political nature; calls for Mr. Chahal to be released immediately pending his being allowed to appeal, with legal representation, against refusal by the Home Secretary to grant political asylum in the United Kingdom; expresses concern that if Mr. Chahal is deported to India he is likely, in the

[Mr. Max Madden]

view of Amnesty International to be subjected to torture, disappearance or extrajudicial execution; recalls Mr. Chahal, when visiting India in 1984, was arrested and detained at Mehta police station for nine days, during which he was beaten and otherwise ill-treated and that he was transferred to a police station in Amritsar and held for another 10 or 11 days, during which he was subjected to torture, including severe beatings and electric shock treatments and regrets that a number of Mr. Chahal's relatives have been tortured or ill-treated while held in police custody, that two relatives have recently been killed by security forces, allegedly in fake encounters and that another relative, Kulwant Singh Nagoke, died in police custody.]

Will the Leader of the House press the Home Secretary to intervene before Mr. Chahal is heard on Monday under the discredited "three wise men" deportation procedure? If he has committed any security offences in Britain, why is he not being dealt with by the British courts? If he has not, why has he not been allowed a full, open, independent appeal, with the right to legal representation, so that all the facts can be brought out and his case can be properly defended?

Mr. MacGregor: I reject the view that this is a discredited procedure, and I repeat what I told the hon. Gentleman recently: the Home Secretary will review the case fully in the light of the advisers' recommendations.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a growing sense of unease on both sides of the House about the case of Guardsmen Povey, Hicks and Ray which was raised in an Adjournment debate by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) the other evening? Although the case involved only three people, the House should be concerned about their fate. The explanations given so far have been appalling, implying that the men were digging a trench for their own benefit and fun.

Such men have to go into places that are sometimes dangerous, and if we do not protect them, the attitude of the Government to looking after those selected to serve in the armed forces will be discredited. The sums of money involved are small when set against the sacrifice and service that we demand of such men. So will the Leader of the House rescue the Government from what will be an increasingly embarrassing problem and see that justice is done for those who serve under the Crown on behalf of the people of this country?

Mr. MacGregor: I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is aware of this case and I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to his attention.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Leader of the House recall that, on every occasion when this country has taken up arms, ever since the Crimean war, through the Jameson raid to the Falklands, the House of Commons has had a serious debate in the aftermath of each conflict?

Before the so-called victory parade on 21 June, should we not have a proper debate on the extraordinary answer that I received on Tuesday from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces? Cancer of the order of 20 cigarettes a day in the short term is in the long and medium term a serious matter in the Kuwait oilfield. Should we not discuss the situation in Kuwait and take the opinion of some of my hon. Friends about the Kurds? Is it not a disgrace that the House can find time for many matters but not for this one?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have to find time for a great many matters at present. For example, three days next week will be taken up by urgent legislation, and I am sure that that time will be fully used. It is, of course, open to the Opposition to use one of their days for this matter. As I said earlier, when we are debating defence matters, it may be possible to raise some of the issues that the hon. Gentleman mentions.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Given the current brutality in Lithuania and Armenia, the monitoring of the conventional forces agreements and the potential trade credits likely to be given through the Group of Seven to the Soviet Union, could my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on east-west relations and, in particular, on relations with the Soviet Union?

Mr. MacGregor: I have noticed what my hon. Friend says. I cannot promise a full day's debate specifically on the matter that he raises, but I am sure that in the coming weeks there will be opportunities to raise it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As I understand it, the Leader of the House was one of those advised to stay in bed today because of the juxtaposition of the planets. I do not know whether that was good advice, or what sort of day he has had. Next week's sleeping arrangements concern us. Will the Leader of the House give some indication of the timetable for the Dangerous Dogs Bill? It would be absurd for him to insist on forcing it through in one day because legislation on the hoof, or perhaps I should say on the paw, will probably be bad legislation. Can we at least have a guarantee that we will be allowed to speak through the night on the Bill, because a day has 24 hours?

Mr. McGregor: I understand that the point about me in today's *Guardian* relates to my horoscope and the month in which I was born. I see from the newspaper that the critical time was 2.56 pm, which time has already passed. I read the advice for today, which was, "Just go slow, don't rush, and don't expect to achieve a great deal." That sounds like the House of Commons on a bad day. I hope that Monday will be a good day, and that we will not have to rush. I hope that we will achieve a great deal. We have allowed almost two days for the debate, because the guillotine will operate until 4 am.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My right hon. Friend will recall being challenged by the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), at business questions on 2 May. The hon. Gentleman said:

> "Ministers in the Welsh Office are writing letters to hospitals pressurising them to opt out of the NHS . . . as a Minister in the Welsh Office has done recently."—[*Official Report*, 2 May 1991; Vol. 190, c. 439.]

I was perturbed to learn that my colleagues in the Welsh Office were doing that. I challenged them about it, because the House knows that it is impossible for hospitals to opt out of the NHS. All my colleagues in the Welsh Office assured me that they had written no such letter. They told me that they had invited the hon. Gentleman to produce the letter that they are alleged to have written, but that he has failed to do so. Will my right hon. Friend make a

statement about the matter or at least invite the hon. Member for Copeland to withdraw the allegation, which still stands on the record?

Mr. MacGregor: I well recall the matter being raised during business questions on 2 May, and I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales has written to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the letter, challenging him to produce it. The hon. Gentleman is always courteous , and I am sure that he will now arrange for a retraction of his statement, because I gather that the letter does not exist.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 919, which is supported by more than 80 hon. Members?

[That this House notes with concern the action of Lewis's Group Ltd. of Leeds, who have raided the company's pension scheme to purchase a property from a subsidiary and to provide the company with a loan at cost of approximately £2 million, including interest to the pension scheme; believes that any surplus should have been used for the beneficiaries of the pension scheme and not to run the business; understands that despite the sacrifice of the workers who had taken a cut in wages of 7·5 per cent. in order to keep the company afloat, unscrupulous employers were able to raid the scheme because of the Government's changes to the pension regulations; and calls on the Government to change the law so that it cannot happen again.]

The company has raided the pension funds of the people who work for it to buy property for development. At the same time, it has asked those workers to take a pay cut of 7·5 per cent. This has happened because the Government have changed the regulations on pension schemes. Will the right hon. Gentleman look into this as a matter of urgency? Will he draw the matter to the attention of the Chief Secretary, and ask him to amend the Finance Bill, which is now being considered in Committee, so that the practice does not continue?

Mr. MacGregor: I can tell the hon. Gentleman straight away that the Government, as he knows, have already taken action to protect the interests of pension scheme members. No payments may be made out of the resources of a pension scheme unless annual increases are guaranteed. We shall shortly introduce regulations to restrict self-investment by pension funds. We have taken the powers to ensure that pension increases will be the first call on funds' surpluses, although no final decision has yet been taken on when this will be introduced.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Could my right hon. Friend allow us a debate on the mechanics of lending to small businesses? In some obscure corners of the House there is misunderstanding of the meaning of margins and the base rate of lending. There was a perfect example this afternoon when the Leader of the Opposition showed his ignorance of these matters.

Mr. MacGregor: If we had to have a debate every time the Leader of the Opposition displayed his ignorance of financial matters, I would be filling up the time of the House with a great deal of debate.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The Leader of the House may be aware that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave the clear impression on Tuesday, during defence Questions, that the long-awaited and long-overdue decision on the Challenger 2 tank would be made before the end of the month. Is the Leader of the House aware that this morning the Ministry of Defence was already back-tracking on the assurance and is now saying that that may not be the case? This intolerable situation could well lead to the loss of jobs and damage the livelihood of hundreds of people in the defence industry. Can we have a statement on the matter next week to clear up the issue once and for all?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman said, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement made it clear earlier in the week that we recognise the concern that the decision should not be delayed unnecessarily. We cannot be drawn into a discussion of detail now, but it is the intention to make a further announcement before the end of the month.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): With the withdrawal of the conciliation service by the Association of British Travel Agents, saving the association about £700,000, is my right hon. Friend aware that the major means of enabling a person who has booked a holiday either in this country or abroad to seek an appropriate grievance procedure has been removed? With the withdrawal of the service, greater pressure will be placed upon trading standards officers throughout the country. Would it be possible at an early stage to debate the matter, bearing in mind the fact that Britain's fastest growth industry is tourism and that inevitably there will be difficulties between now and the end of the summer? The greatest amount that families spend regularly after the purchase of a motor car is on their holidays, yet ABTA has withdrawn a key element of its service.

Mr. MacGregor: I know of my hon. Friend's great interest in tourism matters. I suggest that he might raise the matter to which he has drawn attention in the ways that are available to him in the House.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Can the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made in the debate on the Armed Forces Bill on the true effect of the bombs that were dropped by the coalition forces in the Gulf war? The conflict was presented as a clean war, but it was fought with dirty little weapons. It is clear now that only 7 per cent. of the bombs dropped were precision weapons, and that most of those missed their targets. Will he arrange for a statement to be made so that the House can make a judgment on the future use, sale and deployment of fuel-air explosives, cluster bombs and daisycutter bombs, which are weapons of mass slaughter and high-tech barbarism that should be included in the inhumane weapons protocol of 1981?

Mr. MacGregor: It would not be appropriate for me in business questions to be involved in the substance of the hon. Gentleman's question. I think that he is missing the point of the debate on the Armed Forces Bill, which will take place on Monday 17 June. It would not be relevant to raise on that occasion the matters to which he has referred.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I draw to my hon. Friend's attention early-day motion 921, which stands in the names of 28 right hon. and hon. Members, including myself, on the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

[That this House believes that the Gurkhas have a unique record of service in the British Army and loyalty to the British Crown, that their qualities of adaptability and devotion to duty will still be required in the defence of Britain's interests in an uncertain world in the future; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to confirm that the Gurkha Brigade will continue to have a worthwhile and viable future in the British Army as previously declared by the Right honourable Member for Ayr, the former Secretary of State for Defence on 22nd May 1989.]

Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will make an early statement to confirm that the brigade has a viable and worthwhile future in the British Army? Unlike the county regiments, it does not have constituency Members to represent it: it looks to all those who are Members of this place to secure its interests. After all, the members of the brigade have with their blood served the British Crown with loyalty, courage and dedication. They deserve that we reciprocate in full measure by ensuring that they have a good future in our Army.

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the fine record of the Gurkhas, and associate myself with his remarks, as I am sure the whole House would wish to do. In setting out the way ahead for the future role and size of the Army, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made it clear on June 4 that consultations were taking place in the Army on the future structure of regiments and corps. I know that my hon. Friend will understand that it is not possible to make statements about the future of individual units before that process is complete.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Is the Leader of the House aware of the widespread concern throughout the country about reports of human rights violations in Kashmir? Having been there last week and seen some of the evidence, may I urge the Leader of the House to find time before the summer recess to arrange for a full report or a debate, so that we can see how we can contribute to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the problems that clearly exist in Kashmir?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly do not think that I can promise such a debate in Government time, but I shall discuss with my right hon. Friend other ways of saying something on the issue raised by the hon. Lady before the House rises.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend recollect that, when the Secretary of State for Defence made his announcement about massive cuts in defence manpower earlier this week, he did not do so in the form of a statement, and there was no debate following the announcement? Therefore, the House has been given no opportunity to hear the Secretary of State explain the changes in our national strategy or the changes in the roles or tasks of the armed forces that justify those defence cuts. May we have not only a debate but an urgent debate on this matter before people get the impression that the Government no longer view defence as their prime duty?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend must know perfectly well that his last comment is totally invalid. It is clear that we give strong priority to defence matters. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made clear some of the changes that will have to be considered in relation to "Options for Change" as a result of the changing world scene. I make it clear to my hon. Friend that we are talking about a consultation document, and I assure him that there will be opportunities to debate such matters in the House at the appropriate time.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a Minister to come to the House next week to sort out the conflicting policies pursued by the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Defence, given that, at the same time that the Transport Secretary was saying that we should transfer goods from road to rail, at the central ordnance depot at Donnington, in my constituency, the Secretary of State for Defence was arranging that rail should no longer be used as a means of transport from Donnington and the goods should be transferred to road? He said that the rail link from COD Donnington to the main line would therefore be redundant. If the Government believe in rail transport, is it not time that they at least ensured that the rail links to Ministry of Defence depots are kept open?

Mr. MacGregor: Clearly, each specific issue must be looked at in detail, and I do not know the details of that case. Obviously, there will be different solutions to different problems. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend will no doubt have seen the disturbing reports of apparent housing racketeering in the London borough of Hackney, and the suggestion that it may be going on in other boroughs. In view of the shambles in housing in Hackney, where there are empty houses and millions of pounds of uncollected rents, will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to initiate an urgent inquiry and come back to the House with a statement on what is going on?

Mr. MacGregor: The department of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning is in touch with Hackney council, and I shall discuss with him the possibility of his reporting to the House when investigations are complete. We already know that Hackney's housing management is very poor. As my right hon. Friend rightly says, there are a large number of vacant properties and disgraceful delays in processing the right to buy for tenants—an aspect about which we already know. For people who have forgotten what it is like to live under a Labour Government, this matter is yet another example of what would happen if Labour were in power. It shows the excessive and unnecessary spending of so many Labour councils. That is one aspect that my hon. Friend the Minister will address.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): How much respect does my right hon. Friend think that the Government will earn not only from both sides of the House but from sensible people throughout the country as a result of his recent announcement that we shall have to stay here until 4 o'clock on Tuesday morning to discuss whether an important but simple matter affecting dogs should be decided in the way that he hopes it will be? We all have our own order of priorities. I just happen to have read the extremely important debate in the upper House on three Select Committee reports on science and technology, a

subject that we have not discussed for five or six years. Yet we have to stay here until 4 o'clock in the morning to discuss this important but quite extraordinary matter. Is there no alternative?

Mr. MacGregor: Science and technology is frequently discussed in the Chamber, but I believe that there will be great respect in the country both for the speed with which the Government have acted to introduce the Dangerous Dogs Bill and the speed with which the House will act on the matter. This is a matter of great urgency. The general view from the House this afternoon seems to be that it is a straightforward and relatively simple Bill, and if that is the case I hope that it can be enacted quickly so that we can protect innocent people from the dangers that exist.

If it transpires that there is general agreement, we may end the proceedings well before 4 am. I am trying to achieve a balance between dealing with the matter quickly, as I think the country wants, and giving sufficient time for the Bill to be properly debated.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend find time shortly for a debate on the citizens charter whereby citizens can expect a decent service and if they do not get that they get compensation? Was it not left to the Conservative party to give parents, council tenants and trade union members their rights? It seems that it will be left to the Conservative party yet again to give the ordinary person in the street his rights.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. Giving choice, opportunity and rights to citizens, whether they be patients, parents or trade union members, is a theme which has run strongly through so many of our policies, and it will continue to do so. It will therefore be a theme of many of our debates in the months ahead.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): May I support the request by the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) for an early debate on transport strategy, because Conservative Members have good cause to welcome the change of emphasis and the excellent speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to the *Financial Times* conference last week—particularly the emphasis laid on transporting more freight by rail. Is my right hon. Friend aware that that would enable me to make the point that Taunton Cider in my constituency, despite the withdrawal of British Rail's Speedlink, should be enabled to transport its freight by rail and not clutter up the roads?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made his point already.

Mr. George Walden (Buckinghamshire) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Gentleman here for the statement?

Mr. Walden: No, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Then it is difficult for him to ask a question on it.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the three motions relating to the Scottish Grand Committee.

Ordered,

That the Matter of Scottish higher and further education, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.

That the Matter of local government structure and finance in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.

That the Matter of constitutional issues in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, if the Dangerous Dogs Bill is committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed; and that as soon as the proceedings on any Resolution come to by the House on Dangerous Dogs Bill [Money] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Orders of the Day

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 2

RESOURCES FOR REMUNERATION AWARDS

'( )—(1) Sections 2(1) and 2(5) above shall have effect subject to the provisions of this section.

(2) Any order made or issued under sections 2(1) or 2(5) above in respect of the remuneration of teachers shall be accompanied by a statement that the Secretary of State is satisfied that the resources available to local education authorities in the financial year concerned are (or, in the case of a subsequent financial year, will be) adequate to enable each such authority to make payment to school teachers in that financial year in accordance with section 2(6)(a) above without consequential diminishment of resources available to it for other expenditure.

(3) Where an order in respect of the remuneration of teachers made in accordance with sections 2(1) or 2(5) has effect in more than one financial year, the Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament a further statement otherwise in accordance with subsection (2) above in respect of each such year before the start of that year.'.—*[Mr. Fatchett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.33 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We debated the Bill at some length in Committee and now on Report, as a matter of normal procedure, the Bill carries the words "As amended in Standing Committee A". It is difficult to recall any amendments that were made to the Bill in Committee or any arguments to which Ministers were prepared to listen in Committee. It must be extremely worrying for people outside, who initially may have warmed to the idea of a pay review body, to discover that Ministers refused to listen to the arguments that were advanced in Committee, especially those on the conditions attached to its work.

The Secretary of State has returned from his visit to Japan. He spoke this morning on the "Today" programme about his pay review body. The way in which he warmed to the National Union of Teachers was an interesting new phenomenon, or was it just in contrast to how he feels about the British Medical Association? It may have been the latter.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman tried hard to sell the notion of the pay review body, perhaps not so much as a principle but in terms of the possible or promised outcomes. On hearing that, I thought that he would warm to new clause 2. I was not aware that he would respond to the debate, but my premonition was well founded because not only has he warmed to new clause 2 but I assume that he will show his ministerial colleagues that concessions can be made on the back of a sound argument. As always, a sound argument will be advanced for the new clause.

New clause 2 deals with the funding of pay review body awards and aims to ensure that local government does not find itself in the untenable position of having to meet an award that is not fully funded by the Government. The problem changes substantially as a result of the creation of the pay review body. The Secretary of State will recall the Green Paper that was published in October 1987, when the Government opposed a pay review body. Paragraph 7.18 said that the other groups covered by pay review bodies differ from teachers as,

"For all these groups, the Government is the employer or direct paymaster."

That is not true of teachers. The direct employer may now be a school, and the local education authority. The paymaster will be the local education authority and, for a few grant-maintained schools, the Department of Education and Science.

New clause 2 aims to avoid the pay review body facing one or two problems, or perhaps both. The pay review body may make an award higher than the financial support that is made available to local government under the revenue support grant system. If so, local government faces a problem: does it pay teachers in full—presumably it has a statutory responsibility to do so—and be forced to cut other services, including education? That is one consequence.

The other consequence has worried many teachers and their organisations. Under the Bill, it is possible for the Secretary of State to impose conditions on the way in which the pay review body works. Will one of those conditions be preset in terms of the revenue support to local government? If so, the notion of a free and independent pay review body does not bear close examination. The pay review body would be similar to the interim advisory committee, and it would operate in a financial envelope. It may have come as no surprise to teachers and their organisations when the Minister of State —I think that it was a slip of the tongue but nevertheless a not unimportant one—referred in Committee to the pay review body following on and being similar to the interim advisory committee, which worked with a pre-determined financial envelope. In that event, there is danger that the pay review body will not be independent and be able to make the same kind of expansive commitments that the Secretary of State seemed to hint at in his radio interview this morning. Instead, the pay review body will be constrained and limited.

A further cause for concern is the Government's record, if one takes the interim advisory committee as the model. They may say that that is not a fair model, but the Conservative party's own brief asks its Back Benchers to sell the pay review body on the basis that it was developed from, and is a continuation of, the IAC.

It is clear that the Government have not been prepared fully to fund pay awards recommended by the IAC. In 1988, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), replied to a written question of typical originality from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). It asked the Secretary of State when the report of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions would be published. With his usual perception, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth just happened to arrange for his question to appear on the day that the report was about to be published.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): If the hon. Gentleman looks at the Order Paper for yesterday, he will see that I tabled no fewer than eight specific and individual questions, all relating to teachers' pay—a matter in which Conservative Members display considerable interest.

Mr. Fatchett: It is not my intention to criticise the hon. Gentleman's diligence. I was merely praising his ability to plant questions at the right time, to ensure that they receive the right answers. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman in that way performs a very valuable service to the machinery of Government.

The Secretary of State's reply to that written question set out the details of the IAC report, and stated in paragraph 7:

"Nor is it intended to revise the RSG"—

that is, rate support grant—

"settlements for 1988-89 on account of the proposals set out in paragraph 2 to 6 above."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. *398*.]

In other words, the IAC's recommendations were not met in full. There was a 10 per cent. overload in the money going to local government, which had to be met by cutting education and other services.

A year later—and this must have been a mistake on the part of the Department—a question came from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I am sure that the relationship between him and the Government is not so good that his question was planted, but in any event it received a reply from the then junior education Minister, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher). It stated:

"The salary Bill for school teachers in England will rise by some £440 million in the financial year 1989-90. This is £80 million above the England element of the original limit proposed."

He added that the effect of the

"reduction in the cost of employers' contributions to teachers superannuation will be to reduce the school teachers salary bill by about £25 million. The remaining £55 million to be borne by local education authorities represents less than 0·4 per cent. of local authority education provision."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. *127*.]

As in the previous year, the award was not met in full by the Government and could be honoured only by cuts in local authority expenditure.

In the subsequent two years, the Government adopted a new tactic—not one that has excited teachers tremendously. Instead of meeting the award in full—or at least ordering its payment in full—they have said that it should be phased in over the financial year. That means teachers do not receive the full amount. The Government may argue that the rate support grant covers the full amount of the two phased increases. If that is the case, it has been done at the cost of teachers and their salaries. If —as local authorities would argue—that is not the case, it is at the cost of the jobs of teachers and others, and of services.

We need to know what are the Government's intentions in respect of funding pay review body awards. Do they intend to meet those awards in full, or simply to tell local government, "This is what teachers should be paid—but we are not prepared to make the full amount available."? If that is all that the Government can offer, it is a very bad deal for teachers. They will have a legitimate right to feel concerned about their security, their jobs, investment in the education service and its future, and about other local government services. There is no point in having a pay review body if teachers have to pay the cost, and suffer the consequences, of the awards that it makes. I hope that the Secretary of State will take this opportunity to confirm that it is the Government's intention to meet the full cost of any future pay review body award.

4.45 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): My question arises out of some of the changes to the structure of education announced by the Government in recent weeks—though I recognise that the relevant legislation has yet to be introduced. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) asked about the Government's plans for funding review board pay awards. What will be the position in respect of teachers in sixth form colleges or in the sixth form of a high school—in which case they may also teach in lower forms as a result of the changes of recent years. In the case of someone working at a tertiary college that is run directly—and I accept that there are to be trusts, and all the rest of it—will the title "teacher" still be used generically, and refer also to those who are paid as lecturers at grades I and II, and at all the other grades that exist in sixth form and tertiary colleges?

Mr. Michael Carr (Ribble Valley): New clause 2 draws attention to a serious problem confronting local authorities and the governing bodies of locally-managed schools. Many governing bodies in my own county of Lancashire and in many others throughout England and Wales face serious decisions because the salary budgets for their schools do not allow them to meet the full cost of paying their existing staff. That will inevitably result in redundancies, have a consequent effect on the schools' curriculums, and further seriously damage teacher morale —which is already at a low ebb, and which has been caused entirely by Conservative Administrations.

It is essential that any future pay award recommended by the review body should be sanctioned and met in full by the Secretary of State. It should be fully funded by the Government, and not left to LEAs or to individual school governing bodies to make teachers redundant so that they can balance their books.

I hope that the Secretary of State will agree this afternoon to fund in full any pay increases recommended by the statutory review body. I wholly support the sentiments behind new clause 2, though its wording may leave a little to be desired in achieving the desired effect.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I do not think that the new clause is necessary. I have great confidence in my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State when it comes to the appropriate treatment of teachers. Having said that, however, I want to pick up one of the points made by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

The hon. Gentleman talked of the danger that any future need for the fulfilment of a pay obligation on the part of local authorities might lead to a reduction in the number of teachers. That leads me to the question of class sizes. We do not merely need better-paid teachers of higher quality—although the head of the National Association of Head Teachers has recently drawn attention to the current poor quality of teachers, judged by academic standards. We also need a lower teacher-pupil ratio.

I am familiar with the figures, and I know that they do the Government credit. My constituency and many others, however, contain primary schools with classes numbering more than 30 pupils. We shall not be able to fulfil the requirements of the national curriculum with classes of

[Mr. George Walden]

that size; nor shall we be able to raise educational standards throughout the country to match some of those on the continent.

I hesitate to give Opposition Members any crumb of comfort. As I have said, I have abounding confidence in my right hon. and learned Friend, and entirely recognise that he cannot buy a pig in a poke and announce that the Government will meet whatever requirements the pay review body may come up with, regardless of the economic contingencies. He is bound to wish to maintain reserves, as would the Labour party if—God forbid—it were in government.

Our record on class sizes is good, but it must become much better. Certainly there must be no question of larger classes resulting, however inadvertently, from the operation of the pay review body.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): I support new clause 2. Knowsley had to cut its budget by £4 million this year to contain its poll tax within the cap, thus ending up with a budget £7 million lower than—according to its calculations—was necessary to maintain services at the appropriate level. Obviously, given the proportion of the budget that is allocated to education, the cuts fell heavily on that service.

The education cuts resulted in 100 teacher redundancies, including a number of enforced redundancies, and cuts in schools' delegated budgets. Schools now cannot afford experienced staff, and are forced to hire the cheapest teachers whom they can find—which is not necessarily the best way of supporting the curriculum. As schools shed staff, classes become larger; at the same time, increasing demands are made on teachers in connection with testing. Non-teaching staff numbers are also being cut, which removes the necessary classroom support from the hard-pressed teachers who remain.

Knowsley has an excellent record in nursery provision, but the nursery schools can no longer be staffed. Swimming lessons are, I trust, high on the Government's agenda, but the authority has had to close one learner pool, and another is under threat. I understand that "parents in partnership" and community education are also high on the agenda, but Knowsley's programme, into which it has put considerable effort and resources, is now in jeopardy.

The youth service has been decimated, and instrumental music provision is also in danger. A school of which I am a governor has had its peripatetic music-teaching allocation cut by 50 per cent. Knowsley, although a disadvantaged authority, has a proud record in instrumental music: its youth orchestra and choir annually fill the stage of the Liverpool Philharmonic hall to overflowing, and fill the auditorium to capacity with supporters. The Knowsley youth orchestra and choir are the only such pair to have been invited in recent years to perform at the National Festival of Music for Youth, and the youth orchestra is one of the few to have been invited a second time this year.

That proud programme is now jeopardised. I understand from correspondence that I have received this week that the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales is to include Knowsley in a group of authorities that it will examine closely to assess the affect of school budget cuts on instrumental music teaching.

Cuts in school building maintenance have also been made. I believe that there is a national shortfall of £4 billion in maintenance funds; according to the professional estimate, £8,397,000 is needed to maintain Knowsley's school buildings, but the authority can afford to allocate less than £2·5 million.

Knowsley could not cope with a shortfall in rate support grant funding without doing further serious damage to education. If the Government believe that the extra money could be raised through their sanctioning a levy of poll tax revenue, I can only say that the Secretary of State should read some of the correspondence that I am now receiving from my constituents, who ask me how on earth they can be expected to pay their bills.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) began by saying that he had done me the courtesy of listening to what I said on this morning's "Today" programme. Although I am flattered to learn that he may have paid some attention to my remarks, I realise that he did not switch on his radio to listen to me. To prepare his case on new clause 2—and, no doubt, his case on the whole Bill—he listened, dutifully and attentively, to the words of Mr. Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, who was sitting opposite me. I hope that the hon. Gentleman dutifully stood to attention as Mr. McAvoy's dulcet tones went over the air.

Mr. McAvoy is of course the real opposition spokesman on the Bill; it has nothing to do with the official Opposition. When we observe the extraordinary spectacle of Opposition Members trying, on Report, to find arguments such as those contained in new clause 2 to justify their continued opposition to the idea of a review body, we realise that they are completely in the pocket of the NUT. That is the only explanation for their continued advocacy of the right to take industrial action, the right to engage in free collective bargaining, and all the trappings of industrial relations to which they still adhere—contrary to the advice of the other five teachers' unions and, I believe, that of most sensible members of the public.

The Opposition's scratching around for reasons to oppose the review body proposals is becoming rather pathetic. This morning, I discussed with Mr. McAvoy the extraordinary advertisements that the NUT has decided to use. It appears to think that pictures of me walking down the steps will sell newspapers. That is very nice of the union, but it has nothing to do with what we are discussing. Similarly, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central has had to table new clause 2, and has had to scrape the bottom of the barrel in his search for arguments to justify his continuing resistance to the Government's resolve to give teachers proper professional status, and to settle their pay in a sensible fashion by heeding the advice of an independent review body unless there are clear and compelling reasons not to do so, which is what Governments have always recommended.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I must draw to the attention of the Secretary of State the fact that he has so far not referred to the new clause. I very much hope that he will get to it soon.

5 pm

Mr. Clarke: I have referred to the new clause in exactly the same terms as the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). If I may, I will continue to deal with the arguments that you earlier ruled in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Gentleman's first argument was to raise again the idea that the new clause was needed because of the pre-determined financial envelope within which the review body might have to operate. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well—because we said so in our first announcement and on Second Reading and it was said repeatedly in Standing Committee—that one of the principal differences between the interim advisory committee and the new review body is that the new body will not operate within a predetermined financial envelope. To raise that argument yet again is to return to a wholly failed and false argument and to try to arouse people's suspicions of the review body proposals.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Does the Secretary of State understand this point? It is not a question of challenging directly the veracity of the words that he used. Those of us who have been on the Opposition Benches for some time—a time that will shortly come to an end—have had too much experience of being promised from the Dispatch Box things which are then not delivered or are overturned by successive Ministers.

I give two examples. The first involves a categorical undertaking given during the passage of the Education Reform Act 1988 that no grant-maintained school's character could be changed within five years. The Minister said that there was no need to accept amendments when the Government had given an undertaking in the House that a provision would not be changed. The second example involves the statement made this time last year on the Floor of the House by the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), about the students' vacation hardship allowance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Straw: I am illustrating a point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Chelsea said that the Government justified the withdrawal of housing benefit——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is talking about grant-maintained schools and housing benefit. There is no reference to them in the new clause.

Mr. Straw: That undertaking was also broken. My question to the Secretary of State is this: given the track record of Ministers giving undertakings to the House and then breaking them, why should we accept his undertaking now without it being written in the Bill?

Mr. Clarke: On Second Reading the hon. Gentleman did not once mention the words "pay review body". Surely he cannot have come here again merely to launch into a series of interventions and speeches not remotely related to the subject that we are discussing. He is ashamed of opposing the Bill and he does not want to talk about it. He will not dare to give his opinion on a review body for teachers, but he is backing up his hon. Friend's feeble efforts to find reasons for undermining a policy that he knows is popular with teachers. He knows that the Bill states plainly that the review body will not operate within a predetermined financial envelope.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central said that I was misleading the House by suggesting that teachers might do quite well under the new arrangements and he wished to challenge that claim. Of course, no one can predict what the independent review body will recommend. The Government are submitting themselves to the objective judgment of a body which will recommend the right pay, terms and conditions for teachers.

We are moving towards the review body from a background where the funding of education and teachers has already done very well under this Government. During the lifetime of the Government, funding for pupils has increased by 40 per cent. and teachers' pay has increased by 30 per cent. in real terms. During the lifetime of the last Labour Government, it increased by 6 per cent. in real terms. During the lifetime of this Government, the 30 per cent. real terms increase in teachers' pay has been significantly exceeded by that of doctors and dentists as the Government have acted on the recommendations of the review body for those professions. The same has happened for nurses and midwives as the Government have acted on the recommendations of their review body. On that basis, some teachers—those in shortage subjects, those with good classroom performance and those who commit themselves to a life-long career in teaching—have every reason to be confident in their expectations about the recommendations that a review body would make.

The new clause suggests that the recommendations might somehow be jeopardised by the failure to certify that express sums of money should be made available to finance an award of which the Government approve. The new clause deals with that in a curious way. There is no such thing as a hypothecated revenue for any particular part of local government expending. At no time do the Government separately identify a sum of money which is available only for teachers' pay and nothing else. However, the Government now identify each year in the standard spending assessment that part of the block grant for local government which they believe should be made available for education. Within that, there are many variables which those responsible for managing schools at the moment—mainly the local authorities—must take into account. Expenditure on staff costs is only a part of the total costs in education and those responsible must judge the priorities among staff, buildings and other services.

Although new clause 2 is not relevant to local government spending as it is now organised—there are no such hypothecated sums—I shall deal with the fear expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) that underfunding may set back yet further his proper desire to see a reduction in class sizes in primary schools. I shall also deal with the speech made by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) about cuts in Lancashire and that made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) by explaining what happened this year. This year has not been mentioned by any of the members of the Opposition who have spoken so far except in terms of cuts and difficulties.

This year's standard spending assessment total for the forthcoming financial year will be increased by 16 per cent. compared with that for 1990-91. That is in a year when inflation, as we know, is falling rapidly. We are talking about inflation of approximately 5 per cent. during the

[Mr. Clarke]

course of the year, so the increase in real terms will be about 10 per cent. When that standard spending assessment was set, I do not think that it was clear to what extent inflation would fall by the end of the year, but the Government set it to reflect what we properly anticipated would be the salary costs of teachers.

The assessment was set to allow for three elements. First, it was set to allow for a pay award reflecting the remit given to the interim advisory committee last September. The decision that we have taken in the light of the advice given by the IAC is within that remit. Secondly, there was an element for pay discretions on which the Government are very keen—we allowed £140 million for expenditure on discretionary pay awards in England. Thirdly, there was an element for the follow-through costs of last year's pay award, which was phased. An allowance was built into the standard spending assessment to cover the full year's costs of an end-loaded settlement last year.

It is quite clear that there is no question of any authority not being able to afford the consequences of the Government's decision to fund the IAC's recommendation.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

This is not the occasion to start debating the individual problems of schools in Knowsley or Lancashire, or even the prospect of reductions in class sizes in Buckingham. However, it is absolute nonsense to recite, as two members of the Opposition did, a litany of complaints this year and to imply that they have something to do with a failure to increase the standard spending assessment to cover teachers' pay. If there are difficulties in some areas—I realise that there are some in Knowsley—it is a reflection on the capacity of councils to manage their education budgets, and the consequences of past overspending in areas other than education. It is a red herring to say that the Government do not finance their own decisions.

Of course, it is implicit in our proposals that, given that it will be the Prime Minister's review body, the Prime Minister will receive advice, consult with his Cabinet colleagues and then make a decision. Of course the Government must take decisions for which they know that resources are reasonably available in a well managed authority to be able to provide for the consequences of that decision.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the standard spending assessment for 1991-92, as against the budget for 1990-91 for local authorities, shows an 8·8 per cent. increase? The interim advisory committee's report recommendation for teachers' pay for 1991-92 shows an increase of 11·3 per cent. Will the Secretary of State now give the real figures to the House?

Mr. Clarke: The comparison with the budget, which is about 9 per cent., I do not accept. That would be to accept that the overspending contained within many of those budgets—for education and a wide range of other matters—is absolutely fixed. We all know that within an education budget there are a wide range of variables. The figures that I have given are accurate. It is simply not the case that the Government's funding of local government has failed to match the Government's decisions on the interim advisory committee. If local authorities have recklessly drawn on reserves, overspent in the past and taken decisions which have nothing to do with teachers' pay, it is complete nonsense, in a year when SSAs are up by 16 per cent., to say that the cuts that they are now imposing on their schools because of their incompetence are a result of a Government decision and a result of the independent advisory committee's recommendation.

Mr. Fatchett: The logic of the Secretary of State's argument is that he is supporting imposed cuts in local authority budgets and expenditure on education. The reality is that the increase as against budgets is only 8·8 per cent. In the circumstances, the Secretary of State's only resort is to argue that local authorities are overspending on education. If that is his argument and his case, he should spend more time talking to thousands of parents who see the shortage of funding in our schools. He should spend a little time talking to his hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham who, with some ministerial experience in the Department of Education and Science, understands the shortfall in education expenditure and the implications of it.

Mr. Clarke: The relevant figure is the 16 per cent. that I have described. I shall give an example which I know well because it has been raised with me. In Derbyshire, councillors are making serious cuts in their education provision this year. For some curious reason, they are cutting out the county orchestra. They are cutting staff numbers. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Labur party in Derbyshire is freezing school meal prices at their 1981 level. If it were to go back on that daft decision, it would be able to afford most of the cuts that it is making in its music provision and in staffing levels.

Warwickshire is increasing its spending on education —*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is. Warwickshire is increasing its education spending by £1 million. I have been over this matter with the chief education officer of Warwickshire. The situation is presented in the most obscure way by county councils when they present their figures. They are switching spending from some heads to spending on other heads. They have created difficulties for themselves by drawing heavily on reserves in the past without knowing whether they would be replaced in future, and what they are switching money from is now described as a cut. It is not a consequence of the implementation of the interim advisory committee's recommendations on pay.

My own county of Nottinghamshire made a tremendous performance of making cuts of £7 million. After trying for seven months, I have been able to discover what the £7 million reduction is. Nottinghamshire is increasing its real terms spending on education, admittedly by a small amount. It is switching from one head to another and it is describing what it is cutting as cuts. Again, on the back of a 15 per cent. to 16 per cent. increase in the standard spending assessment, that has nothing whatever to do with an alleged underfunding of the teachers' pay settlement.

The Labour party advocates with more vehemence than I sometimes do the principle of local authority control of education. If we are to have local authority management of education we should have proper accountability. People should actually take responsibility for their decisions. It is quite pathetic that, every time one county council or another makes an extraordinary decision to cut parts of its

teaching profession, the official Opposition give credibility to the crazy claim that it is something to do with teacher's pay not being funded by central Government. That is not the history. If in future the review body were to make recommendations which had not been anticipated by the Government, the Government would have to face the fact that when a Government take a decision, particularly on the authority of their Prime Minister, that Government must consider carefully whether that decision can properly be funded. Normally, I would expect the standard spending assessment to cover it, but it might not. One then must ask whether efficiencies in other areas are reasonably possible. One may have to phase the award, or the Government may have to face the fact that it is reasonable to make extra provision above that originally planned in order to provide the necessary funding which the Prime Minister has authorised.

5.15 pm

The very act of setting up a review body, as we have shown in other services, is a commitment by the Government to take independent advice unless there are clear and compelling reasons to the contrary. It falls to the Government to find the major part of the funding for those decisions. Now that we finally have the local government contribution down to a smaller proportion of the overall cost of local government, and have committed ourselves to keeping the community charge and, ultimately, the council tax share down to a lower proportion, the Government must of course have regard to the funding consequences of decisions. However, for the reasons that I touched on earlier, we do not need this new clause or anything like it to give effect to that.

If any undertakings need to be given about implementing review bodies or about funding consequences, they should be made by the Opposition. As we set up the review body, we still do not know whether the Labour party is committed to it or whether it would repeal it. Could teachers be allowed to know whether a Labour Government would abolish the review body or, if they would not abolish it, whether they would fund its recommendations in full? Do Labour Members reject the constant reserve that clear and compelling reasons justify a Government modifying it? Frankly, the Labour party will not come to power if it plays the games that it has played in relation to the review body so far and commits itself to backing a policy being forced upon the National Union of Teachers by all the militants at the conference at Easter and forced upon the Labour party——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see how those matters can conceivably arise under the new clause. The Secretary of State will stick to the new clause.

Mr. Clarke: I always have the greatest respect for your decisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but my remarks seem to have some bearing on resources and the funding of awards, which is what new clause 2 is all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State talked about the policy of the Labour party. That subject does not arise under the new clause. It might be relevant on Third Reading. Perhaps he will defer it until then.

Mr. Clarke: On the condition that, if I am making good progress, you will still declare me to be in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There will be no conditions. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will now address the new clause.

Mr. Clarke: I think that I am entitled to ask. Mr. Deputy Speaker, within the terms of new clause 2, in exactly what way the Labour party is putting it forward and what commitment it has behind it. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central has been advocating that the new clause is required to oblige the Government to fund their decisions. I have explained how the Government have funded decisions in the past and will fund their decisions reasonably in future. The only time the review body system has been in serious difficulties of a kind relevant to the new clause was not in this Government's period of office. In 1970, the doctors' and dentists' review body resigned when the then Government refused to implement its recommendations and referred the matter to the then pay policy body —or whatever it was called, which I cannot remember. This Government have implemented in full the review body recommendations. People have received the benefits because the funds have been available to pay them. The Labour Government reneged on a review body arrangement and broke their word to the doctors. For that reason, on Third Reading the Opposition should clarify their policy and, as they continue to oppose a review body, they should explain what they would put in its place.

Mr. Fatchett: It is always clear when the Secretary of State has a weak script and a weak argument because the quantity of red herrings increases and the volume of the bluster increases at the same time.

I want to correct the record in respect of three points made by the Secretary of State. First, he came out with his normal red herring about the right to take industrial action. Anyone who served on the Standing Committee or who has had more than a passing knowledge of or interest in the Bill will realise that there is no reference to industrial action in the Bill. It is a shame that the Secretary of State has not had time to read his own Bill.

Secondly, the Secretary of State said that the Labour party was stuck in a position of supporting collective bargaining. The Secretary of State has a very short memory. Only a few weeks ago, he brought a Bill to the House that was based on the principles of collective bargaining. He said that that was the best way to make progress. He was either right then, in which case he has now shifted his argument, or he was wrong and was misleading the House about his views. The simple fact is that back in November he told us that he supported collective bargaining. On that same evening, he proudly announced that each of the candidates for the Tory party leadership also supported the principle of collective bargaining for teachers.

Finally, the Secretary of State tried to shift the argument on to a predetermined financial envelope for the review body. That was not the argument. As I made clear, the argument was about funding local authorities so that they can pay teachers.

The Secretary of State's most interesting comment was that the standard spending assessments may not cover all the costs of the pay review award. That is the message that will go to local government from this debate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Mr. Fatchett: That is what the Secretary of State said.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My recollection is that I said what the Government would have to do if we found that the previously determined set of SSAs did not meet the costs and I described a variety of options. I have made it clear that a Government who take decisions must have regard to the funding of those decisions. I stuck to that throughout my speech. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) did not say what decision the Opposition would take on any of those aspects.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State is again trying to shift his ground. We were not arguing that Governments do not have to take account of financial considerations. The Secretary of State can check the record. He said that there will be occasions when the SSAs might not cover the full cost of the pay review award. He did not make it clear that the Government would meet the difference. The message to local government and teachers from this debate is that there is absolutely no guarantee that the Government will meet the costs of a pay award from the pay review body. That is worrying.

That is the record of the IAC and the record that has led to the problems in educational expenditure to which my right hon. and hon. Friends referred. Those problems were also mentioned by the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

We realise that the new clause does not and cannot persuade the Government to fund to local authorities the full extent of the pay award. We needed a short debate to discover the Government's intentions. We have done that and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

ESTABLISHMENT OF REVIEW BODY TO CONSIDER STATUTORY CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF SCHOOL TEACHERS

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 5, after 'shall', insert

'after consultation with those representing the interests of local education authorities, school teachers and governers,'.

The amendment has the merit of being simple, brief and overwhelmingly convincing. Indeed, it is not a planted amendment, an allegation that I understand was made in my absence about a sophisticated question that I tabled some time ago.

Mr. Fatchett: That was meant to be praise.

Mr. Hughes: I am always grateful to receive praise from the hon. Gentleman.

I hope that the Minister will be able to accept the purpose of the amendment. It is intended to ensure that a consultation process is written into the Bill before the pay review body is established. As the pay review body is set up, the various bodies with obvious interests should be consulted and those should involve local education authorities, teachers and governors. I must point out that the spelling of "governors" on the amendment paper is not my responsibility. It is inaccurate and I fear that it is a printer's error. It is not the fault of the draftsmen.

I have heard many Government replies to amendments like amendment No. 5 and I can anticipate the Minister's reply. He may say that this is not something that needs to be written into the Bill. He may also say that the composition of the review body is set out in the schedule and that is true. He will say that there are regulations about the procedures of the review body in the schedule and that is also true. He will also say that there is enough guidance for the review body set out in clause 1 to ensure that it does its job properly.

As the Minister will understand—and this point will be raised again when we consider amendment No. 9—everyone interested in this subject and those affected by it are concerned about the independence of the review body. They can express their views most forcefully about that by writing in a consultation clause. I hope that the overwhelming and unequivocal merit of the amendment will commend itself to the Government and that they will prove to be conciliatory and supportive of those in the profession. I hope that we can end this debate in a few minutes without a Division or acrimony.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): I welcome the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to our debate, even at this late stage. I apologise for having to give him the reply that he anticipated.

The review body is not a negotiating committee, as I am sure he is aware. It is not constituted from nominees representing the various interested parties. The members of the review body will be chosen by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as the people best fitted to give him independent advice. We have made it clear all along that we intend the school teachers' review body to operate on exactly the same basis as the other review bodies, which are not and have never been constituted of representatives of different parts of the profession whose pay they determined. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey may be interested to know that the health service review bodies specifically exclude representatives of those involved in the health service professions whose pay they determine.

There has never been a suggestion that the other review bodies have not been sufficiently informed or understanding about the professions involved. I am not aware of any doubts that have been raised about their competence. The amendment may be intended to ensure that the interested parties can put forward names for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to consider. If that is the case, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured to learn that they will be free to do that. However, to write in a requirement to consult along the lines suggested in the amendment would be contrary to the principle of an independent review body.

It might follow from the amendment that appointments should be made only if all or a majority of interested parties are content with a particular name. That would clearly be unworkable as each party would want to see its own interest represented. As I have said, the intention is to establish not a representative body but an independent one. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make appointments to the new review body, exactly as he does to the existing review bodies. I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, having reflected on that, will withdraw his amendment. If not, I must advise my colleagues to reject it.

5.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister's and the Government's line is predictable. The answers do not address the specific point. The best that the civil servants could do was to address the answers to a related point. The amendment suggests that there should be consultation before an independent body is set up. I do not ask that there should be representatives of interest groups on the review body. I understand that it is an independent review body.

One matter which the Minister might well anticipate that the people listed in the amendment might have as their interest is whether the body is really independent. In the debate on amendment No. 9, we shall debate whether the body will be serviced independently. The Minister said something that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) may have heard—that this review body would be like all the others. One way in which it does not yet appear that it will be like all the others is that it will have an independent secretariat serviced by the Office of Manpower Economics. If this body is to be like all the others, one factor that the people listed in the amendment will want to ensure before it is set up is that it will have that independence.

I hear what the Minister says, but I do not find it satisfactory. The people who will be affected by the body will not find it satisfactory either. The Prime Minister will receive advice. The list of the great and the good will be trawled. Why cannot he also receive advice from the people most affected?

Mr. Fallon: He will.

Mr. Hughes: Then that is fine. They have been told by the Minister that they can submit names. But we also ask that they be consulted. The Minister said that the Government were not willing to write that into the Bill or to undergo a consultative process before setting up the review body. That is sad. The other place may find it sad and may be able to deliver the votes to make sure that the proposal goes through. It is often amendments such as this which are accepted in the other place, as the Minister well knows.

Hoping, as we often have to do, that the other unelected House will come to our rescue, I am willing, although reluctantly, to seek the leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that amendment No. 1 is not to be moved. Therefore, we come to amendment No. 9.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 8, line 11, at end insert—

'Secretariat

4A(1) The Chairman may appoint one or more employees as he thinks fit to perform all or part of the functions of an independent secretariat to the review body.

(2) The Chairman shall pay to his employee or employees such remuneration and allowances as he may determine.

(3) The employee or employees shall be appointed on such other terms and conditions as he may determine.

(4) A determination under sub-paragraph (2) or (3) above requires the approval of the Secretary of State given with the consent of the Treasury.

4B(1) Notwithstanding paragraph 4A above, the Chairman may commission any person, body or organisation to perform all or any remaining part of the functions of an independent secretariat.

(2) The Chairman shall pay to any person, body or organisation commissioned under sub-paragraph (1) above such fees as he may determine.

(3) A determination under sub-paragraph (2) above requires the approval of the Secretary of State given with the consent of the Treasury.

4C Any expenses arising under paragraphs 4A or 4B above shall be met by the Secretary of State.'.

I was interested to hear what the Secretary of State had to say. I welcome him back from Japan. He has obviously missed the fact that the majority of teaching unions are unhappy with the pay review body as it is currently proposed, and with the Bill. Unless the amendment is accepted, we shall be confident that the majority of organisations are against the Bill and support opposition to the Bill.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): So the hon. Lady opposes the Bill.

Ms. Armstrong: The Minister of State is very impatient. I do not want to raise his blood pressure any more today. Perhaps it would help if he simply listened a little.

The other interesting thing about the speech of the Secretary of State was that he kept reminding us of the value of other pay review bodies, as did his junior Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). But, of course, one of the major problems with this pay review body, as the hon. Member for Southwark, and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, is that it is not like other pay review bodies. It gives the teachers' organisations no confidence that the body will be able to act with the independence and determination that other pay review bodies have had. It is in the light of that that I move the amendment.

With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to take hon. Members through the amendment. It starts by saying that

"The Chairman may appoint one or more employees as he thinks fit."

That would put the pay review body in line with other such bodies. The interim advisory committee was serviced by members who were seconded from the Department of Education and Science. Valuable and worthwhile as their work was—I am sure that as individuals those members were honourable and upright and strove to sustain their independence—teachers do not have confidence that a similar method of servicing the new body would sustain its independence, whatever the nature of the Government in power.

The amendment specifically seeks to give the pay review body power to determine the nature of its secretariat and from where it seeks its support in developing, seeking and compiling the additional information on many matters which we—and, indeed, the Secretary of State—wish it to examine. I am sure that the body would need to examine issues such as the London allowance. Indeed, the IAC has said that the new body would have to examine such issues.

The amendment would give the new body power over the new secretariat and the power to commission additional work to support the work of the secretariat. I cannot emphasise strongly enough how critical we, and both employers and teachers, believe the amendment is. It worries me that the Government have not tabled a similar amendment. They never accept the wording of our amendments. They are always happy to tell us that our

[Ms. Armstrong]

wording is not perfect. In those circumstances, I hoped that the Government would table amendments today. However, I hope that, in the absence of that, they will reassure us that they will table amendments in another place.

The Under-Secretary responded to requests from the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) in Committee, as reported in column 87 of *Hansard*. He recognised that it was important that the secretariat was perceived to be independent. His answer referred back to the practice of the IAC. The answer was not acceptable, certainly to the Opposition. Neither is it acceptable to the National Association of Head Teachers or the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association. Neither of those organisations is happy with the Bill proceeding without a guarantee of the power to fund independent advice, knowledge and support through an independent secretariat.

We have heard many blandishments from the Secretary of State today and outside the House. We have heard blandishments from junior Ministers about their wish to enhance through a teachers' pay review body the professional status of teachers. They will remain blandishments if the Government do not give the pay review body the independent status which teachers and employers seek. The Government cannot say, "Yes, we want you to have professional status, but we are not prepared to let you outside the clutches of the DES for the nature of your information and your secretariat." That is not to say anything wrong about the DES.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Lady keeps saying how critical the amendment is and how blandishments will remain blandishments unless we give the undertaking she seeks. If she were satisfied that the review body would have an independent secretariat, would the Labour party change its mind about its opposition to the review body? Is the matter that critical?

Ms. Armstrong: I might be a new Member, but I am not that new or green. We would need to see the nature of that independence and the wording before we gave assurances —*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members like to wind me up and I care so passionately about education that I often let them get away with it. Even so, I will not fall into the trap that the right hon. and learned Gentleman sets for me.

We want from the Government a sense of sanity and reasonableness. Even in my darker moments, I like to believe that everyone, including members of the Government, act with the best of intentions. While I want to believe that they do, we must have evidence from them about the Government's commitment to the independence of this body, and to do that they must ensure that it has the same powers as other pay review bodies, none of which has the type of secondment arrangement that the Bill proposes for the secretariat. All other such bodies have power to decide how their secretariats shall be employed, and they all use the Office of Manpower Economics.

The pay review body applying to teachers should have the same powers. In particular, it should have power to commission research and studies from other organisations and have information-gathering abilities. The Government must show that this body will have the ability to live up to what they are claiming for it, and that is the purpose of my amendment.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): In Committee, we enjoyed many examples of the thinking of the Opposition. On the whole, it was a great debate, featuring the hon. Members for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) versus their hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), about the rights and wrongs of shackling teacher unions and pay bargaining.

There followed what might be called a rough coming together of the Opposition, under the banner of the National Union of Teachers, in stout opposition to the other five teacher unions. I am delighted that, in the meantime, the hon. Member for Durham, North-West seems at least to have listened to the voices of some of the other teacher unions.

It is extraordinary that the Opposition have raised the issue today because, as the hon. Lady rightly said, not one member of the Opposition raised the matter in Committee —although she had the grace to say that I broached the subject. I did so because, like my hon. Friends, I had been listening to the teachers in the schools and to their union representatives. It became clear that the overwhelming majority of them supported the Bill and wanted to see it enacted.

Even so, they wanted one element of reassurance to underscore their support for the measure. That reassurance related to the independence, perceived and actual, of the secretariat. It was clear that that was necessary if they were fully to support the review body. They were right to raise the point, and that is why I raised it in Committee.

The most effective way to show independence of intent is to have independence of research in the secretariat that supports the review body. That is why it was important for us to consider the possibility of the Office of Manpower Economics being the body which would support the review body. In no way is that a criticism of the work of the Department of Education and Science or the interim advisory committee.

The Office of Manpower Economics has great experience of comparable pay review bodies, and that enables it to assess technical data, to obtain evidence, to give guidance and to fill the gaps in research as they appear. I gave in Committee an example linked to nurses which might relate to areas of teacher shortage, where such a body would possess the experience to fill in the gaps of such a review body.

5.45 pm

When responding to that debate in Committee, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary fairly said not just that the existing machinery for the interim advisory committee had worked well but that the Office of Manpower Economics had also worked well for those other bodies. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West was neither generous nor accurate in recalling my hon. Friend's reply on that occasion, when he promised to give further consideration to the suggestions that I had made.

I reiterate my request to the Government to look carefully at the need for the teaching profession to be reassured about the real independence of the body and to examine whether the sort of formula that can be provided by the OME should be the way forward. I feel sure that the Minister has looked into the matter, and I hope that, in the light of my comments, he will respond favourably to my request.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I support the amendment and will answer the question that the Secretary of State put not to me but to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong). He asked what she would do if the Government accepted the amendment. I—and my hon. Friends, who will be here when the Third Reading is put to the vote—would happily support the Government in that event. Indeed, the position that my hon. Friends and I take will depend on what the Minister says when replying to this debate.

I was not aware before entering the Chamber that the Secretary of State had just returned from Japan. It could turn out to have been a more dangerous journey for him than he thinks, if he has returned more like a tosa dog than when he went. Members concerned with education appear to be travelling far and wide these days. The only reason why I am taking part in the debate—as a recycled environmental educational stand-in, as it were—is that my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) is on his way home after attending his brother's wedding in America. And the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has recently travelled all the way to and from Westminster in search of education.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) put his case fairly and moderately. I gather that his main point was not a matter of controversy on Second Reading or in Committee, but it is now clearly an issue of concern. I hope that the Minister, who I have known well for a long time, will take on board the fact that the teachers' associations which support a pay review body believe that the argument for an independent body, independently serviced, is paramount for them in deciding whether they can support the Bill.

Opportunities to get everybody on board—or nearly everybody in this case since the NUT is excluded—are rare. The Minister has an opportunity in the coming half hour or so to get on board all the teachers' unions and associations—as I say, apart from the NUT—and to achieve the support of all hon. Members, apart from Labour Members. It is all his for the taking. So I encourage him to be generous, farsighted and statesman-like and to do something to win the confidence of all those in, and the many who represent, the teaching profession.

May I add to the points made by the hon. Member for Battersea? First, the Minister knows—there were meetings I understand only this morning on this very issue—that the teachers' associations, including the National Association of Head Teachers, and the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, now say that they cannot support the Bill without an independence provision. Secondly, it appears that Ministers have equivocated on the matter because the original intention seems to have been to have a body on all fours with the other pay review bodies, which are well-respected because they are well serviced by the Office of Manpower Economics. Thirdly, if the members of a pay review body are all appointed by the Prime Minister—I accept that that is the position in the other pay review bodies—so that they are there by power of patronage, they must be seen to be doing their job independently. To do so, they must be able to draw on an independent, professional group of people to advise them, look elsewhere for statistics, and make comparable studies. It is important that that secretariat is independent of the DES and the Treasury. They must be seen to be giving credibility to the pay review body.

If the pay review body is not independent, it will give the impression that it is like the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions. It must therefore have a small, manageable back-up secretariat. The other pay review bodies and the professions that look to them for their pay have less of their workings dependent on the direction of the Secretary of State. All the other pay review bodies use the Office of Manpower Economics and there is no logical reason why teachers should not do so too.

The conclusion of the message that has been put to the Minister is that there will be an enormous opportunity for this issue to become relatively impartial and apolitical, as the pay of civil servants, doctors and nurses has now become, because an authoritative body speaks out. That will not be possible if the pay review bodies do not have the support mechanisms to do their job properly. Therefore, the Minister has it for the asking. It is important to the profession that he gives a generous response. I hope that, despite the impression given at the last meeting with representatives of the associations and unions concerned, the Government will agree that an independent secretariat, along the lines of the amendment, will be acceptable.

The Minister of State for Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): It is always a pleasure to join in the debate with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), even when he is standing in for the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). I hope that the hon. Member for Truro has had an enjoyable wedding, even if it was his brother's.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) was less than charitable to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) says that it is uncharacteristic, and I bow to his judgment. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea was the only person to raise the issue during the debate. There was neither a cheep nor a chirp from the Labour party, who did not recognise the importance of the issue. The reason is obvious—Labour Members had been reading only the National Union of Teachers' brief and were worried only about their relationship with the hon. Members for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). We all miss the hon. Member for Hillsborough, as it is unusual for him to be absent during an education debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea said, the debate in Committee took place—much to our enjoyment—between the Labour Front Bench and the Labour Back Bench. It was a question of how they could keep their members under control.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West is, yet again, trying to scratch around to find excuses to oppose the Bill. That has been going on for the 19 or so hours in which we have been debating the Bill. The Opposition still do not know whether they oppose or support a pay review body.

Mr. Straw: We do know!

Mr. Eggar: I shall willingly give way to the hon. Gentleman, but he is still reluctant to make clear his position on the Bill. I fear that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may become somewhat restless if I do not turn my attention to amendment No. 9.

[Mr. Eggar]

The pay review body must have an efficient, independent and knowledgeable secretariat. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), said in Committee, two broad options were available: the option that everyone has accepted worked well for the interim advisory committee—neither the unions nor the Opposition have impugned the independence of the secretariat that was provided by the IAC—and the option that operates for the other pay review bodies, where they rely on the OME. We have had to consider which of those two options was the most appropriate. In so doing, we paid attention to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea and noted the views of the professional associations, as put forward by hon. Members.

I am not sure who was meeting who this morning, but I assure the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that I met no one. However, the views of two of the associations have been made available to us and we have taken account of those. We have also had to take account of the fact that the secretariat needs the right kind of expertise to advise the chairman and members of the review body and carry out the work that the review body thinks appropriate. The chairman must be able to direct the work of the independent secretariat on behalf of the review body. However, there is no need for the chairman personally to employ the staff in the secretariat, as that would go beyond the strict requirements.

The Department of Education and Science will do all it can to ensure that the OME has access to the relevant knowledge and data within the Department. Some of the Department's information would not normally be available to the OME. My right hon. and learned Friend has decided that the review body's secretariat should follow the pattern of the other review bodies and the secretariat should be provided by the OME. Thus, the review body will receive the support and advice of the same kind and quality, including support on statistical and technical matters, from the same independent source as the other review bodies.

Obviously, the secretariat will be answerable to the review body and will work under the review body's direction, specifically under the direction of the chairman. The independence of the secretariat and of the review body will therefore be fully guaranteed.

6 pm

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) sought an assurance in a throwaway line—my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea also raised this point—that the OME would be able to conduct independent research should it be required to by the review body. Hon. Members will be aware that the OME regularly conducts independent surveys of nursing vacancies, for example, and of the workload and responsibilities of hospital consultants, in its role of helping other review bodies. In addition to that work, the OME has also commissioned special surveys from consultants in the private sector when requested to do so by the review bodies. I am happy to confirm that the OME will be able to provide exactly the same service as it is felt appropriate by the teachers' review body. Furthermore, that body, through its secretariat at the OME, will naturally have access to the relevant data collected by the DES, and it will receive every possible assistance from the DES in the work that it sets out to do.

For my part I could not have been clearer in what I have just said. I have accepted that the OME will provide the secretariat for the review body and I have done so as a result of consideration of the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea. Now it is up to the Opposition to be clear in their turn. Will they support the Bill or not? Will they give the assurances that teachers want? Will they state categorically that they accept a pay review body for school teachers?

Ms. Armstrong: I understand that we are still dealing with amendment No. 9. This is an historic occasion. I do not believe that I have ever before moved an amendment which the Government have accepted in spirit even if they did not want to include it in the Bill. I therefore claim an important victory for the amendment—*[Interruption.]* This is, after all, our amendment. I therefore beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

6.2 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: As no one else seems to want to speak yet, I will go first.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) explained on Second Reading, the Liberal Democrats support the idea of a pay review body as a much better alternative to the IAC. While I was education spokesman, of course, we argued for a return to negotiations. Now that we have had a clear answer to the question about the independence of the secretariat supporting the chairman of the pay review body, this proposal appears far better than the present IAC arrangement. The Secretary of State knows that, now that that matter has been clarified, this proposal is supported by all the professional associations, with the exception of the National Union of Teachers.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) will return before the end of Third Reading because he can confirm that his professional colleagues—for instance, at the school where he taught until earlier this year—overwhelmingly support the idea of a pay review body as a better offer—naturally, in the hope that there will be enough funding to meet the body's recommendations in full. Any professional body would naturally wish that the Government will automatically fund its review body's recommendations.

I, too, await with some interest the revelation of the position to be adopted by Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen. I missed out on the fun in Committee——

Mr. Eggar: It was not fun.

Mr. Hughes: In any event, I missed the developments in Committee—the quiet running battle between members of the Labour party. We wait to hear from them in a moment.

My party will vote with the Government on Third Reading. My offer to the Minister was unequivocal; this has been one of those occasions in which people can be persuaded to debate——

Mr. Eggar: We have not changed our minds.

Mr. Hughes: That is a bit unfair. Originally, the Government offered no guarantee of an independent

secretariat. Now they have said that they will guarantee one, so they have been persuaded to change and not to allow the DES to service the secretariat. I welcome that.

Teachers will be pleased by today's developments. I hope that they will be pleased with a pay review body that now has an independent secretariat. That is a far better arrangement than what we have at present, and the sooner teachers have their pay independently examined and the sooner they are given a pay structure that provides them with the status and objective evaluation of their needs that they require, the better. I hope that all three major parties in the House will endorse that.

6.6 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Like the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I missed the fun in Committee, but I thought that the hon. Gentleman's remarks were generous. He has unequivocally committed his party to the support of this Bill. I was also pleased to hear the tribute that he paid to the Minister of State. Unfortunately, the Labour party has not been able to bring itself to joining in with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. I thought that Opposition Members were very slow to respond to the repeated challenges from my right hon. and hon. Friends on the issue of whether they support the Bill. I certainly hope that they will make their position clear towards the end of this debate and that they will support the Government.

I welcome this Bill. It is markedly different from the original version presented to the House some months ago. Given the Prime Minister's commitment to education, this Bill is a major step forward—*[Laughter.]* The old jokes are often the best. The Bill will be widely welcomed not only by most of the teaching profession but by all those who are more generally associated with education, including parents and those in industry.

For a long time, teachers have been concerned about their status and about how they are viewed by society. Much of the responsibility for the decline in their position in society lies with them. Only recently, we saw one teachers' union at its annual conference urging industrial action in pursuit of a pay claim. Hon. Members on both sides of the House find that abhorrent. Doctors, lawyers and accountants do not take strike action in pursuit of pay claims, and calls for such action bring the teaching profession into disrepute—especially in the eyes of the parents whose children should be receiving education.

The Bill represents a genuine step forward, and I hope that it will come to be accepted by all the teaching unions, including—who knows?—by the NUT. There is of course a quid pro quo: in return for the introduction of the review body, the unions must undertake not to take strike action against their employers in pursuit of pay claims. But employers are only part of the equation, because when teachers strike they take action against the nations' children, and all hon. Members must deplore that.

For a long time, I have argued in the House that the majority of teachers are committed to their profession and to the children in their charge. The Bill gives teachers an opportunity to confirm that view and it is an important step in improving the esteem in which teachers are held. As some of my hon. Friends have said, teachers are not Government employees. Their pay is not directly financed by the Exchequer, and for that reason the review body should be statutory and should cover conditions as well as pay. To use the words of a former Secretary of State for Education and Science, Sir Keith Joseph, teachers' pay must be good enough to enable the profession to recruit, retain and motivate teachers of good calibre.

Since 1979, there has been a real increase in teachers' pay of about 30 per cent. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State mentioned that in his speech. There is considerable virtue in comparing the proposed review body for teachers with the review bodies for doctors and nurses in the national health service. Significantly, since the inception of their review body about six years ago, nurses have received a pay increase of some 63 per cent. In real terms, that is an increase over the rate of inflation of 22 per cent. If that precedent is anything to go by, teachers can look forward to a substantial improvement in their pay over the next few years. That increase in nurses' pay was not at the expense of jobs, because the number of nurses has considerably increased during the period of the review body. I hope that that answers the point of an Opposition Member, who said that there might be teacher redundancies.

One of the problems which has to be faced is the intransigence of some teacher unions. They and their apologists in the House have long argued that they should be absolutely entitled to take industrial action in pursuit of pay claims, notwithstanding the impact and effect of such action on the nation's children. I am optimistic that wiser counsels in the teacher unions will now prevail. I think that the review body will be widely welcomed by teachers, if not by all their trade unions, and in that I am delighted to have the support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler).

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already said that the review body recommendations will be implemented unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary. I have some difficulty in visualising such reasons. I am pleased to see that the Bill, like its predecessor, provides for schools to decide rates of pay according to their perceived needs, taking into account prevailing local conditions. Grant-maintained schools will be able to make their own arrangements, as was proposed in the original Bill. That will be widely welcomed, at least by Conservative Members.

I am pleased to see that clause 3 requires governors in grant-maintained schools to consult teachers before applying for exemption from the national pay and conditions system. That matter was discussed at some length in Committee when it considered the original Bill. I received representations on the issue, and was pleased to support them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: Given the hon. Gentleman's support for the Bill, I am tempted to call him my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hughes: That would be going too far.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the opt-out provision for grant-maintained schools. My colleagues and I are still unhappy about that, but we intend to vote for Third Reading.

Mr. Pawsey: I am delighted to hear the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remark. I shall not seek to press the point lest I open a divide between myself and the hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Pawsey]

Clause 5 empowers the Secretary of State to make an order defining payments or benefits that are to be regarded as remuneration, and what is, or is not, part of a teacher's professional duties. The clause also enables the Secretary of State to decide the conditions of employment that should be regarded as statutory.

At present, non-statutory conditions of employment are set out in what is known as the Burgundy Book under

"Conditions of service for school teachers in England and Wales."

That book is produced by all the education trade unions, with one marked exception, the Professional Association of Teachers. That is an unfortunate and, I believe, unintentional omission, and I urge Ministers to ensure that all nationally recognised teacher trade unions are party to the negotiations on non-statutory conditions of service. Plainly, it is unfair that one specific union should be excluded. The Professional Association of Teachers brings considerable restraint to the negotiating table, and that should be actively encouraged. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) for their support on that point.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Powerful support.

Mr. Pawsey: I acknowledge that point by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

I was pleased to see that His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales said in his speech on education:

"The announcement on a new pay review body for teachers could go a long way to encouraging more first rate people to choose teaching as a career."

He is, of course, right and I was delighted to hear his cheerful support. It is the first time that I have been able to quote His Royal Highness in an education debate, and perhaps in future he will take even more interest in education. I look forward to hearing what he has to say.

I have never been able to understand the argument that pay negotiations are good only if they are sanctified by a trade union agreement. Negotiations by teachers for teachers at individual schools must have value at least equal to that of a trade union. Once that idea and the concept of greater individual freedom are accepted by teachers they will find it extremely beneficial. Teachers in grant-maintained schools will be able directly to negotiate with their employers, and substantial benefits will flow from that.

Almost by definition, teachers are a particularly articulate group, and should have confidence in their ability to negotiate pay and conditions without recourse to the machinery of a trade union. Teachers need the crutch of a trade union less than most, and that point is further underlined when one remembers that much of the decline in teachers' status has occurred over the past 11 years, when their unions were at their most militant. I suspect that teachers would have been better served by their unions if they had been less inclined to act like a militant shop floor.

There is a persuasive argument that the teaching profession should act more like other professions, such as lawyers, doctors and accountants. Significantly, those professions do very well without the benefit of a central negotiating body. They are well able to negotiate their pay and conditions with individual employers and companies. Their status, their pay and their conditions do not suffer as a result of individuals negotiating individual arrangements.

I support the Bill, and I hope that it will enjoy the full-hearted support of us all, including the official Opposition.

6.20 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): The speech of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) was the greatest load of claptrap to which I have had to listen during my time here, which is almost four years. I never heard so much rubbish.

Never could a Bill have emerged from consideration in Committee with so few changes. The Government refused to offer any concessions in Committee, although Opposition Members worked hard to try to get them to do so. It is not surprising that the Government adopted that approach. Indeed, we expected nothing else. The concession by the Government this afternoon will have not one iota of practical effect. The majority of the amendments before us today were irrelevant in any event.

The fact is that teachers have lost their right to negotiate with their employers. As many hon. Members have said, the teachers' rights will not be restored to them, at least under this Government. They have lost their fundamental right for their unions to be able to negotiate their pay and conditions.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steinberg: No. The hon. Gentleman had long enough to express his views. I am not giving way.

Mr. Pawsey: Give way.

Mr. Steinberg: I shall not give way. Sit down.

Teachers lost some of their rights when the interim advisory committee was introduced in 1987, and they will continue to lose them. In effect, teachers' negotiating rights came to an end in 1987. I cannot perceive any difference between the IAC and the pay review body that we shall have to accept this evening.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): If the hon. Gentleman is opposed to the concept of a pay review body, why does he think that doctors, nurses and consultants support their review bodies and would be horrified if it were proposed that they should lose them?

Mr. Steinberg: First, the review bodies that were set up for the doctors, nurses and others were established after consultation with representative organisations. The teachers were not consulted about a review body. Secondly, the review bodies that have been established for doctors and nurses do not determine conditions of employment. The teachers' review body will determine pay and conditions of service, and that is unacceptable.

On Second Reading, I asked the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), the Liberal Democrats' education spokesman, to explain the difference between the IAC and the pay review body. The hon. Gentleman said that he would explain it in Committee. I put the same question to the hon. Gentleman in Committee, and he said that he had already answered it. It was hardly a conclusive answer, and certainly not an answer that I could readily accept.

In fact, there is no difference between the IAC and the pay review body. Indeed, I would be prepared to argue that the proposed review body will probably be worse than the IAC, because it will not be independent.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I have checked the *Official Report* to see what was said on Second Reading, but I have not had time to check whether my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) gave a full answer to the hon. Gentleman's question in Committee. I suggest that there may not be that much difference between the two bodies in practice. It may be that one difference will be the existence of an independent secretariat. The majority of teachers are in favour of the review body, because in general they had a good experience under the IAC.

Mr. Steinberg: That is a matter of opinion. Statistics show that, in 1974, the average pay of teachers was 136 per cent. of non-manual earnings. After the IAC had come to an end, or even during its reign to 1990, the average salary of a teacher was 104 per cent. of non-manual earnings. Teachers did not do very well out of the IAC.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Steinberg: I shall not give way. I must continue.

The Bill allows the Secretary of State to choose the chairman and members of the review body. He can decide what it should discuss. He will be able to amend its recommendations or ignore them and implement what he wants in his own way. When he was interviewed on a radio programme this morning, he denied that and said that he will not have such powers. The Bill's provisions make it clear that he wil have the powers that I have described. The Secretary of State is either misleading the House or he is being economical with the truth.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Steinberg: Just one moment. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has had a fair say this afternoon; he should let me have my say.

Clause 1(1) states:

"The Prime Minister shall appoint a body"

and adds that matters

"may from time to time be referred to the review body by the Secretary of State."

Can anyone other than the Secretary of State submit anything to the review body? Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be able to answer my question. In Committee, the hon. Member for Truro tabled an amendment that provided, in effect, that it should be the duty of the review body to have regard to any views expressed to it by any organisation representing teachers on matters bearing on the professional status of teachers. The Government rejected it. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said on the wireless this morning that anybody could make submissions to the review body, but it was not true.

The Secretary of State told us this morning that he would not be able to overrule the pay review body. However, clause 2(1) states that the Secretary of State may make provision

"by order giving effect to the recommendations of the review body, with or without modification, or making such other provision with respect to the matters referred to the review body as he thinks fit."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman told us that he will not be able to overrule the pay review body, but the Bill makes it clear that he will be able to do that and will be in a position to implement anything that he thinks fit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Steinberg: I shall give way when I have mentioned a third discrepancy.

Clause 2(5) tells us:

"the Secretary of State may make a pay and conditions order by virtue of this sub-section if—

(b) it appears to the Secretary of State to be expedient to make the provision in question."

The Secretary of State will be able to do whatever he likes. He will be able to ignore the review body and implement his proposals as he thinks fits. Perhaps the Secretary of State will explain to us why he said during an interview broadcast on the radio this morning that he would not be able to overrule the review body, when the Bill states clearly in three different places that he will be able to take such action.

Mr. Clarke: The Bill makes it clear that the pay review body is under a statutory duty to consider matters referred to it by the Secretary of State, but it will be able to consider anything else that is put to it by any other body, including the National Union of Teachers, for which the hon. Gentleman speaks. The Bill makes it clear that, if the Secretary of State wishes to make a substantial modification to the review body's recommendations, he can do so only by obtaining Parliament's consent so to act. All these matters were considered in Committee. I know that the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied, but the reality is far removed from the NUT's advertisement. The hon. Gentleman has been a clear, passionate and consistent opponent of the idea of the review body, but will he vote against Third Reading?

Mr. Steinberg: I am not satisfied with that answer. Frankly, the Secretary of State has been economical with the truth. Furthermore, I am not speaking on behalf of the National Union of Teachers. I have no connection with the NUT other than that I am a member. I am not a consultant for the NUT. I am a member of another union as well, and I am entitled to speak my opinion; the NUT does not rule me. I have some principles; perhaps the Secretary of State does not. I speak from the heart and nowhere else.

Mr. Eggar: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steinberg: No.

Mr. Pawsey: How will the hon. Gentleman vote?

Mr. Steinberg: I shall vote against the Bill.

In his answer to me, the Secretary of State virtually told us to trust him and trust his actions. Would hon. Members and people throughout the country trust the present Secretary of State for Education and Science? My answer would be no. Those in the health service did not trust him, the teachers do not trust him, and I certainly do not.

When we debated the Education Reform Act 1988, we were told to trust the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he now?"] One may well ask. He is probably out with the dogs or in his kennel or just being got at by a rottweiler. We were told to trust the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, who

[Mr. Steinberg]

said that the character of schools that opted out would not be changed within five years. Then the present Secretary of State comes along, and that is forgotten. I do not trust him, and many others will not.

The Secretary of State originally said that he would give the teachers a pay review body only if they gave up their right to take industrial action, but that never appeared in the Bill. The impression he gave was that teachers were militant and were constantly on strike and causing disruption. But if we look carefully at the statistics during the past 20 years—from 1971 to 1991—we see that 1 million days have been lost in the teaching profession through industrial action. Who were the Government in power while all those days were lost? We all know that the Conservative Government were in power—it is they who have antagonised the teaching profession from 1971 and who continue to do so.

It is the democratic right of all people to withdraw their labour, but the pay review body prevents that. The Secretary of State has not made it clear what he will do if teachers take industrial action. Will he abandon the pay review body or use powers to dictate a settlement? He will do the latter. It seems clear that the teachers' unions are not all that much in favour of the pay review body. The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers said in its recent document:

"The pay review body proposed is far from perfect on the question of composition. It will be appointed by the Prime Minister, although the Association would prefer to have some say on the nominations. Our preference would be for an independent chair with representation split evenly between government on one side and unions on the other."

If that is not a negotiating body, I do not know what is. The NASUWT does not like the pay review body, but wants negotiations like everybody else.

The Bill is an abomination. It takes away the rights of teachers to negotiate pay, and I shall vote against it on Third Reading.

6.36 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway: I think that someone in the House should tell my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that he is much trusted in education. We in the profession appreciate the stand that he has taken to achieve this legislation, which will profit teachers as they have not been helped for many years.

The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) said, almost with pride, that 1 million days were lost through teacher strikes, but that is to the shame of teachers, not their credit—*[Interruption.]* I am choking after listening to the hon. Member for City of Durham for so long; I have now regained my voice.

Anyone who has been in the profession as long as I have —23 years—would be amazed to hear that the five unions —the Secondary Heads Association, the Professional Association of Teachers, the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, the National Association of Schoolmaster/Union of Women Teachers and the National Association of Head Teachers—speak with one voice. What is remarkable is that they do so in welcoming the legislation.

We are not surprised, but sorry, that the National Union of Teachers has not come on side—and I believe that it will rue the day. Members of the NUT up and down the country will welcome the legislation when they see the pay review body in action and begin to profit from it, as they will. I think that they will press the NUT to change its view and it will have to do so—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) for the glass of water he is offering me and for the light relief that it is providing to the House.

I welcome the pay review body as a suitable replacement for the IAC and particularly as a long-term replacement for the Burnham committee. Having been a member of the profession when it came entirely under the auspices of the Burnham committee, I know, as do other hon. Members, that something new and different was needed to replace it. Under that body, eight of the last 12 efforts to produce agreements ended in strikes and difficulties right across the country. The value of the new organisation that we are to have is that it will provide a suitable mechanism for a time of great change in education at all levels, particularly in schools.

I remember taking part militantly in a battle for higher pay when Lord Eccles was Secretary of State for Education and Science. We called our action "More shekels, less Eccles". We should remember that the Labour party so often speaks with two voices on education; I should like to hear what it thinks about the pay review body and whether it supports it.

I remember standing with a group of teachers when Barbara Castle was Secretary of State for Employment and Anthony Crosland was Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1969. The teachers were striking and Barbara Castle said to the group, "Good luck to you all, I hope you win." She then went back to the Cabinet and voted against rises for teachers. That is the sort of thing I mean—I do not say that unkindly, but factually: the Labour party too often speaks on education with a forked tongue, and teachers do not forget that.

I hope that, as a result of the Bill, there will be a no-strike deal. That would be good for education, teachers and children.

Ms. Armstrong: That is not in the Bill.

Mr. Greenway: I did not say that it was in the Bill. If the hon. Lady listened, she would hear what I say. I said that, as a result of the Bill, I hope that we shall see a no-strike deal, because that would benefit everyone involved in the well-being of our children.

The pay review body will facilitate suitable differentials, and more of them, within the profession. More thought needs to be given to that; that will be one of the early tasks of the body when it is established.

I particularly hope that teachers with heavy responsibilities will get the differentials they should have to reward them for the work they do. But even more than that, I hope that good teachers will get increased differentials and that they will not be lured from teaching full time at the chalk face and into administrative jobs and so on. One of the absurdities of the teaching profession is that, the better one is at it, the less teaching one does, because good teachers are promoted to administrative jobs. I believe that the Bill will overcome that.

It is particularly important to say that we need to pay and retain good teachers in secondary schools, and particularly in primary schools. Primary schools are not

receiving all the encouragement they should in the form of differentials, and I hope that the new body will bring them more.

No one should imagine that the pay review body will be a means of depressing teachers' pay. I believe that teachers' pay will rise substantially. We as a society need to accept that, face it, know that it will happen and encourage it to happen.

6.41 pm

Mr. Carr: The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) referred to the relative position of teachers' pay in the mid-1970s and the IAC days. In the pre-IAC days of the early 1980s, teachers' pay had dropped even lower than that. Many members of my association and many teachers generally were very unhappy pre-IAC—not that they were over-enamoured of the IAC.

Mr. Steinberg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carr: No. I shall keep my remarks brief.

The Burnham committee was a monumental disaster in its latter days. It did not result in any reasonable settlements and was part of the reason for the industrial action. It was not the only reason; the major reason for the industrial action was the fact that the Government refused to pay teachers properly. However, I leave that aside.

We have some reservations about the powers remaining with the Secretary of State in relation to the pay review body. We would have preferred to see fewer powers of direction. Nevertheless, I am happy to join my colleagues in support of the Bill.

Mr. Fatchett: Colleague.

Mr. Carr: There will be more.

I am happy to support the Bill, since the majority of teachers support the introduction of a pay review body. We have reservations about the terms of the pay review body, and we hope that our reservations will be noted, but in general the majority of teachers and Liberal Democrats support the introduction of the pay review body.

6.43 pm

Mr. Straw: Conservative Members have demanded an explanation of the Labour party's position on review bodies. I am constantly surprised by that phoney demand because our position on the principle of review bodies is clear. We are in favour of review bodies where they are agreed by the parties concerned and operate in an independent way.

I am also surprised that the Secretary of State's advisers have not briefed him on what I said in the House a year ago today when I was asked by the then Secretary of State what the Labour party would have done. I replied:

"We would have ensured that there were negotiations between teachers and employers . . . to have allowed free negotiations between teachers and their employers, or had a review body".—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1990; Vol. 173, c. 740.]

We have supported review bodies for the doctors, dentists, nurses and many other groups.

I hope that the Secretary of State, leaving aside the insults to which he usually resorts when he has a weak case, does not try to tax the credibility of the House with a claim that he has been completely consistent on the issue of review bodies and that they are some litmus test of support either for the education service or for the running of a public service. If he does he will have some rather difficult questions to answer, one of which is why he refused a proposal from the unions and the Labour party for a review body for the ambulance personnel——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, I did not.

Mr. Straw: Yes, the right hon. and learned Gentleman did—I have the cuttings here—perpetrating havoc in the ambulance service.

The other question is why the right hon. and learned Gentleman turned down the idea of a review body in the House on 27 November 1990 during the debate on the first School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) asked the right hon. and learned Gentleman if he would commit himself to a review of teachers' pay because the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), who was a candidate for the Conservative leadership, was going round the House saying that there would be a review of teachers' pay if he was elected.

This very Secretary of State sat here, who now says that he has always believed in a review body for teachers since he was at school and has never departed from that belief, who is now claiming that as the most consistent principle in the whole of his political existence, and who, when asked by my hon. Friend about the review body, said:

"However, I do not believe that we shall embark on a fresh review of pay arrangements when the Bill"—

the first Bill, which he now opposes—

"contains excellent arrangements that should be enacted and put into force."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 751.]

He then went on to recommend that Bill.

The job of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) is always to read out whatever brief is put in front of him, and he does it elegantly. I understand that that is his job, and I hope that he will get preferment for it. He can live in hope and expectation. I think that he is a good man. But he has tonight made a speech in support of the No. 2 Bill when only six months ago he was making a speech against it in support of the first Bill. He said:

"I welcome the Bill, because I believe that, over time, it will help to raise teacher morale."

One of the things that the hon. Gentleman commended about the previous Bill was that there had been substantial consultations—which is not the case on this Bill—between the Government and teacher unions, as well as employers and local education authorities. On and on he went, and at the end he said:

"This measure is one way in which we can show our support for teachers and direct more money towards them."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1990; Vol. 1981, c. 781-4.]

The Secretary of State and the hon. Gentleman have experienced an interesting conversion.

Sir Norman Fowler: Does that mean that we are all agreed on the issue—that the Labour party are in favour of the pay review body and that if, God forbid, there were a Labour Government, they would not go back on the review body?

Mr. Straw: I am coming to that. I am certainly in favour of review bodies. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman is here, because he experienced a personal conversion when he chaired the private Conservative seminar in January on the future of Conservative education policy. I have been sent a copy of the report, which says:

[Mr. Straw]

"There is a crisis of confidence amongst teachers of such growing magnitude that it now threatens the entire spectrum of the Government's educational reforms."

I am not surprised that, for the first time since he gave up Cabinet office, the right hon. Gentleman has come to our debates, no doubt to learn from the Labour party's policy how it would deal with that crisis of confidence.

Sir Norman Fowler: What is the answer to my question?

Mr. Straw: The answer to the question is this. On Second Reading we put down a reasoned amendment. By the way, the Liberal Democrats voted in favour of it. That reasoned amendment, apart from objecting to the way in which the Secretary of State had treated the House and members of the Standing Committee by suspending the previous Bill without explanation, spelled out our three conditions for supporting the review body.

We said that we declined to give a Second Reading to the Bill, first, because it contained no proposals to raise teachers' professionalism by the establishment of a general teachers council; secondly, because the policies of the Government had led to a serious decline in the morale, motivation, recruitment and retention of teachers and in their relative pay; and thirdly, because it gave unacceptable powers to the Secretary of State to issue directions to the pay review body. Those were the tests.

I am grateful for what the Minister said about an independent secretariat under the Office of Manpower Economics. There is no cavilling about that; we are grateful to him. However, the conditions that we set out on Second Reading have not been satisfied. I spoke at length on Second Reading about the issue of powers.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will Labour vote against the Bill?

Mr. Straw: We shall vote against the Bill. It is the Opposition's job to scrutinise legislation. It is not enough for Ministers to say, "Trust us." As my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) said, why on earth should we trust the Government when they have broken their word time and again? They have told us, "There is no reason to accept the amendment; you need only trust us." That is what they said about the five-year period before grant-maintained schools could change their character. When they abolished housing benefit, they said "Trust us, there is a vocation hardship allowance," but they have now abolished it.

The Bill, unlike the arrangements for any other review body, gives the Secretary of State the power to issue directions to the review body in advance. It is an unqualified power, and there is no reason for it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have joined him many times in criticising Government policy. He has heard my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) say that we are unhappy about the powers. He rightly said that we voted for the Labour party's reasoned amendment, but the problem is that this is our last chance to vote on the Bill. The issue, surely, is whether the proposals on offer—with all the disadvantages that we have mentioned—are better or worse than the present system. I find it difficult to believe that the Labour party does not think that they are an improvement, and therefore feels that it must vote against the Bill. I do not understand.

Mr. Straw: It is a most extraordinary proposition for a member of the Opposition to advance, that we should give the Government the legislation. I expect that the hon. Gentleman will vote for the council tax, because it can be argued that it is marginally better than the poll tax. If the hon. Gentleman reads the reasoned amendment, for which he voted only a few weeks ago, and the Bill, which has been unamended on the principal provisions to which we objected, I should be surprised if he joins the Government in the Lobby.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Every now and again, the hon. Gentleman gets near to his case. For the first time, he has revealed that he will vote against the Bill. Therefore, he is voting against a review body. He is trying to throw it out, either to return to the interim advisory committee or, more likely, to Burnham. The only reason he can give for that is one line in clause 1(4), which says:

"The Secretary of State may give directions to the review body as to considerations to which they are to have regard."

Is that the reason? Does the hon. Gentleman expect us to believe that, on that basis, the Labour party is flatly against a review body for teachers?

Mr. Straw: Yes. Clause 1 is the operative clause of the Bill. It gives the Secretary of State unprecedented powers to give directions to the review body, but Ministers have no such powers to give directions to other review bodies. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman will now say that he accepts our arguments, we will not vote against the Bill.

We are discussing the machinery for settling pay. Anybody would think that we were discussing the record of a Government who had been beneficence itself and had paid teachers properly. Despite the Secretary of State's flim-flam, since 1987 teachers have had no pay increase; their pay, relative to other groups, has declined. In this pre-election year, the Secretary of State may be trying to screw from his colleagues in the Treasury some real-terms increases for this year, but were the Government re-elected, which they will not be, they could not increase investment in education because of their prior commitment to cut taxation to 20p in the pound. I am sure that the Secretary of State will not say that that is being abandoned.

We want agreed machinery for the settlement of teachers' pay and a Government who are committed to paying teachers properly. We have neither from the Government, and we will vote against the Bill.

6.55 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At quite an early stage of our 19 hours of debate on the Bill, I accused the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) of using weasel words on the principle. Any self-respecting weasel would blush with shame at the policy that has been advanced by the hon. Gentleman.

Most of this evening's debate has been conducted in an atmosphere of considerable hilarity, despite this being an extremely serious subject. At times, we have resembled a good-natured school debating society rather than the usual atmosphere of the House. The reason is not only the bonhomie of the participants in the debate—there is a good-natured selection from the three parties—but

because the position of the official Opposition is farcical. I have never heard a sillier attitude to a Bill that is popular with the profession at which it is directed.

We have had 19 hours of debate, at the end of which the denouement is that the official Opposition will vote against the review body. In the last year before an election, that means that, if they were elected, they would get rid of the review body. They would use some other method of negotiating teachers' pay that ensured the right to strike, on which the hon. Member for Blackburn laid so much emphasis when we first debated the Bill. It is all of a piece with their commitment to industrial action, which they have demonstrated when teachers have taken it in the past.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Secretary of State want to take it away?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly.

Mr. Cryer: By law?

Mr. Clarke: Not by law. No law takes the right to strike from nurses or doctors. No law will take away from teachers the right to strike. Those professions, which have a review body, are stopped from taking industrial action by their commitment to their pupils, to their patients, to the general public and to the services on which they lay such value.

At times, Labour Members have behaved like delegates in the halls and corridors of the NUT conference at Easter, and have passionately defended the right to strike. In the past, they have shown their enthusiasm for industrial action in schools. It is not farcical but deeply tragic that the Labour party still espouses such views on a great public service like the education service because it cannot think of a reason for taking that view that they dare state clearly in public.

We have had 19 hours of debate, but most of the speeches of Labour Members were on aspects of education that had nothing to do with the settlement of pay. They said anything they could think of to keep the debate going while they sustained that attitude. The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) has been wholly consistent. The same can be said of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). On this issue at least, they are on the left of their party, and are wholly committed to the idea of industrial action in the state education service, when necessary.

The members of the Opposition Front Bench cannot think of any sensible reasons for opposing the Bill. The nearest we got to hearing one was when the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) moved an amendment emphasising how critical it was that the review body should have an independent secretariat, as all the others have. She made the case for the Office of Manpower Economics, and cited the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, the National Association of Head Teachers, and two other unions, who had begun to express reservations about the review body that they had first supported, when they thought that the Office of Manpower Economics might not be providing the secretariat.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), in a perfectly straightforward speech, said that that aspect was important and that they might go with the NAHT if we did not satisfy them on that point. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, who took the Bill through Committee with great skill and industry, explained that there would be a secretariat like that of the OME.

It is interesting that that point, which determined whether the Liberals would vote for the Bill on Third Reading, and which was critical to the attitude taken by Labour, was not raised by either party until this stage in our 19 hours of debate. Neither of them had thought about it before. It was my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) who in Committee urged that the OME should serve as the secretariat—and who received from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary an undertaking that it would.

The only reason that Labour has for opposing the Bill is that which the hon. Member for Blackburn came very near to admitting. It is that the National Union of Teachers is dictating to the Labour party what its position should be. Anyone who reads the NUT's full-page advertisements in the morning newspapers and compares them with the Government's policies and the contents of the Bill knows that the NUT cannot think of any reasons in reality for opposing the Bill. The NUT's stated reasons are based on a totally inaccurate representation of the proposition that we have put forward.

The NUT is driven forward by its constitution, which enables some extremely left-wing teachers to attend meetings at seaside towns, at which they impose on their union a ridiculous policy that is contrary to the opinions of most of the NUT's members—and which says that the union is against a pay review body and in favour of militant industrial action and the use of industrial muscle in the classroom instead.

The nearest that the hon. Member for Blackburn came to admitting the real reason for his opposition was when he said that Labour's views on review bodies are clear—that it is in favour of them, when they are agreed to by the parties concerned. The NUT does not agree to a review body. The Labour party cannot agree to a review body. The Labour party is about to vote against a review body and commit itself to a policy on the state education service that is dictated by a wholly militant and unrepresentative minority.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr), who is himself a former teacher, rightly said that the majority of teachers welcome the establishment of an independent review body, and look forward to having their pay determined in the way that doctors and the clinical professions have enjoyed for many years.

The Government have brought forward the review body because we believe that not only the teachers but the public support the idea of giving that professional status to teachers. If one has any commitment to education, it makes obvious common sense that there ought never to be industrial action in the classroom. It does mean asking teachers to make the sacrifice of giving up the possibility of taking industrial action, and therefore it is right that the Government should offer to submit themselves to the independent advisory review body, which will enable us to make proper provision for teachers in future—perhaps of the generous kind anticipated by my hon. Friend the Minister of State—without the risk of industrial action returning to the classroom.

I described Labour's position as farcical. It is positively damaging. It reveals that the allegedly new-style Labour party, with all the advice that its leaders have taken from their image-makers as to their clothes, costumes and

[Mr. Clarke]

presentation, is bereft of independent action when it comes to a serious conflict of opinion with one of the more militant trade unions in the public service, the National Union of Teachers.

If Labour ever returned to government, presumably it would—as its vote tonight suggests—repeal the review body. If it were returned to government, who would ever believe that it would face up to one of the white-collar professional trade unions whenever it was confronted by a challenge over any significant issue? Who believes that Labour would have the courage to resist industrial action, and would not deal with any crisis in a damaging way?

Farcical is how I have described Labour's attitude. Disgraceful is what I could call it. I invite Labour to go ahead with its vote. I has taken Labour Members 19 hours to reach the stage at which they should creep with shame to the Lobby that they intend to enter, where they will show their true colours by voting against one of the most welcome and important Bills that the education service has seen in a generation.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 280, Noes 172.

Division No. 159] **[7.05 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Prisoners of War (Compensation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

7.18 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): On 21 July 1988, I drew the attention of the House to an early-day motion which had attracted a large number of signatures. It stated:

"That this House, in welcoming the growing friendship between Japan and the United Kingdom, believes that this friendship will not fully blossom until the wrongs done during the Second World War to Allied prisoners are fully accepted by the Japanese Government and due reparation made."

The response of the Minister of State was strangely ambivalent. He conceded that a debt of gratitude was owed to all who had fought and suffered in world war 2, but a Labour Government had signed the 1951 treaty with Japan and their Conservative successor had ratified it. That treaty, said the Minister, was binding on us all, and was a full and final settlement. It was nothing of the kind. British service men who survived Japanese cruelty and neglect—I emphasise the word "survived"—received the pitiful sum of £76·50, and civilian internees received £48·50 from the proceeds of Japanese assets seized here at the outbreak of war. That was all. Worse than that, the treaty ignored all the established international conventions governing the laws of war and the treatment of prisoners.

Ironically, although I have never heard anybody say it, the treaty spat in the face of the third Geneva convention of 1949 to which we had put our signature two years earlier. The House may like to know what that convention stated. Article 129 provided that persons who committed "grave breaches" should be brought to account. Article 130 defined grave breaches as

"wilful killing, torture and inhumane treatment, including biological experiments, wilfully causing grave suffering and serious injury to body or health."

Moreover, Parliament and the nation were not ignorant of what had happened to our service men and civilians who had had the misfortune to fall into Japanese hands. On 28 January 1944 the House had listened in silent horror —as one of our great national newspapers said at the time —to a statement by the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Anthony Eden. Speaking in a low voice, as the newspaper described it—one can imagine the atmosphere in the House because we were still at war with Germany and with Japan—he said:

"I fear I have grave news to give to the House."—[*Official Report,* 28 January 1944; Vol. 396, c. 1029.]

He then gave details of the appalling ill treatment of thousands of British and Commonwealth prisoners.

I had the good fortune, one might say, of serving on the personal staff of Admiral Lord Mountbatten, supreme allied commander in south-east Asia. I went straight there after the general election in 1945 and I saw for myself the condition of some of the pitiful survivors of Japanese cruelty then coming out of prison camps. It was a moving experience, although by that time we all knew what to expect as the war came to an end.

I will set out the stark facts. In 1946 Parliament was told in Command Paper 6832 that of the total number of British prisoners of war who fell into enemy hands in Europe and in the middle east, 5·5 per cent. died in capitivity. That was not an excessively large figure because it must have included many who, when captured, were already grieviously wounded. Of those who fell into German hands, 5·5 per cent. died in capitivity, but the proportion who died at the hands of the Japanese in a shorter period was four to five times greater.

Mr. Eden said in his statement that the Japanese

"had violated not only the principles of International Law but all canons of decent and civilised conduct."

He continued:

"Let the Japanese Government reflect that in time to come the record of their military authorities in this war will not be forgotten."—[*Official Report,* 28 January 1944; Vol. 396, c. 1032-3.]

I wish to remind hon. Members, many of whom were not even born at that time, that that record should never be forgotten. Down the ages, civilised nations—but not the war-time Japanese—have waged war under rules governing the treatment of prisoners, the sick and the wounded. One of our greatest commanders, Field Marshal Slim, who led the 14th army down through Burma to Rangoon driving the Japanese before him, recorded much later what his troops found in the final stages. The prisoner-of-war camps that they uncovered were

"little more than barbed wire enclosures in which wild beasts might have been herded together."

He described the Japanese gaolers

"almost without exception as being callously indifferent to suffering, or at the worst, bestially sadistic. The food was of a quality and a quantity barely enough to keep men alive, let alone fit them for the hard labour that most were driven to perform. It was horrifying to see them moving slowly about these sordid camps, all emaciated, many walking skeletons, numbers covered with suppurating sores and most naked apart from the ragged shorts they had worn for years or loin cloths of sacking. The most heart moving of all were those who lay on wretched pallets, their strength ebbing faster than relief could be brought to them."

Such deliberate cruelty and utter indifference to suffering had been characteristic of the Japanese from the start of hostilities. As so many hon. Members were children or not even born at that time, it is necessary to spell that out. I cite the case of my friend Bill Holtham, who lives not very far away from me in Essex. He was wounded in the last stages of the fighting in Singapore and was taken into the Alexander hospital which, as the Japanese advanced, was soon in no man's land. As the Japanese closed in, they stormed the hospital, killing the doctors and hospital staff and savagely bayoneting the sick in their beds. Holtham was one of the very few eye witnesses of their barbarity. He managed to escape—but not for long. He was re-captured and sent to labour on the infamous Siam-Burma railway, where our men were to die like flies.

I cite the case of the 1,080 British prisoners shipped out on the Singapore Maru for slave labour in Japanese-occupied territory; 23 desperately ill men were taken off before the ship sailed, 63 died on the voyage and their bodies were thrown overboard, 280 sick men were left aboard the vessel at the port of arrival, six weeks later, 127 of them were dead.

Try, if you can, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to imagine the sadistic games that the Japanese guards played in the camps—for example, binding a man with barbed wire, forcing water down his throat through a hosepipe and then jumping on him in sheer delight, or tying men to trees in full sight of their comrades, without food or water in the burning heat by day and the bitter cold by night, screaming in agony at first and then, as their lives drained away on the second or third day, falling silent.

Can you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, imagine any greater depravity than what happened at a camp for British slave

labourers at Saigon docks? On three Saturday evenings in succession, leading Japanese dignitaries in the area and their womenfolk were invited to a drinks party in the camp compound. Tables were set out, food was laid, and the saki flowed. Guards then dragged out a prisoner chosen at random. There was no warning—the guards seized a prisoner, dragged him out, bound him to a pole in the middle of the compound and slowly beat him to death in front of the invited guests, who applauded ever more loudly in their intoxication.

Spare a thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for those who came home later, but whose suffering continues to this day. I shall not name any names, but in every case that I cite an affidavit has been made. There is the case of a young prisoner who was beaten repeatedly by Japanese rifle butts and then thrust into a small bamboo cage in the full sight of his fellow prisoners and kept there for several days without food or water. When the war ended and he came home an absolute wreck, did his release end his suffering? Not at all—he was to spend the next seven years in and out of Roehampton hospital, Guy's hospital, and the hospital for tropical diseases.

Let us reflect on the agonies of another survivor who is still alive today. In his years of captivity he suffered in succession chronic enteritis, dengue fever, bacillary dysentery, amoebic dysentery, tropical ulcers, pellagra, Weil's disease, pulmonary tuberculosis, beri-beri and rheumatic fever. On capture he weighed 11 stone, but on release he weighed four and a half stone. Despite his condition, he was repeatedly beaten by his gaolers. Since his return home, broken in health, he has lost the sight of one eye.

Let me tell hon. Members exactly what that man has experienced since his return home. He had rheumatic fever in an RAF hospital in December 1945. In 1952 he had an appendectomy. In 1973 he had a toe removed. In 1978 he had a prostatectomy, three operations in 20 hours, intensive care for five days and a transfusion of 26 pints of blood. In 1981 he had a massive detachment of the retina of his left eye. At that time he had glaucoma in his right eye. In 1982 he had a second detachment. I have the names of the distinguished surgeons who attended him. In June 1983 he had a third detachment, and in September of that year he had a fourth detachment.

In December 1984 he had a large cyst removed from his left testicle. That was at Luton and Dunstable hospital. In June 1985, he had an orchidectomy on the left side. In April 1986, his left eye was removed by an eye surgeon. In February 1988, he had a total replacement of his right knee. In 1990 he had a coronary artery bypass grafting.

We now come to the present year. In January, resulting from all that had gone before, he had an incisional hernia —his sternum had failed—and last month he had a freezing and destruction of haemorrhoidal tissue. I should like to know how, in heaven's name, that poor devil still lives—a life-long victim of Japanese cruelty.

Try to grasp if you can, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that many of the survivors of that cruelty have had nightmares ever since. Men have told me how they wake up sweating and fearful, usually followed by bouts of depression. In such cases—I know of one—that has led to severe heart conditions. Thus the price of being a wartime guest of the Japanese is still being paid by many of our men 45 years later.

Yet that is only a tiny fraction of what has been suffered by men still living. Some of them will be known to hon. Members on both sides who have connections with ex-service men's organisations. They will know perfectly well what I am talking about. All these cases were set out in affidavits that were signed and witnessed and checked at the Ministry of Defence. If there is any sense of honour in today's Japanese, they should make generous recompense without further delay—as the second richest nation on earth, they can well afford it.

They will have to face the issue anyway, whether they like it or not. For in 1988, I told the House that the Canadian defenders of Hong Kong had lodged a claim for compensation with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, based on resolution 1503 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. That was done under the inspired leadership of a remarkable Canadian, Clifford Chatterton. He had not been a prisoner of the Japanese, but he had been severely wounded in the war. The Canadian claim had the full support of a number of leading international organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross the International Committee of Jurists, the World Veterans Federation, the International Commission of Health Professionals and Amnesty International. The Minister who replied was totally unaware that the Canadians had raised the matter in that way. The Canadian case was founded on details of the medical sequelae of what had happened to the victims of Japanese barbarism, and it called for compensation for gross violation of human rights.

Since then, I am glad to say that there have been impressive developments. The Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association of Great Britain is well known to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who sits for a constituency that I once represented. That association, led superbly by Bill Holtham, whose experience I have already described, has submitted its own detailed case to the United Nations commission. Similar representations have been made by veterans' organisations in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the Netherlands. The Dutch are deeply involved, because there were many Dutch people in south-east Asia.

I do not know what the response will be. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights gave Japan six months in which to provide an answer and that period is nearly over. My information is that there is a stirring of conscience in Japan especially among the younger people. Yesterday's *Daily Telegraph*, commenting that

"the Japanese, the world's greatest face savers are learning to say sorry".

stated that the Japanese Prime Minister had apologised during an official visit by the Canadian Prime Minister. According to another newspaper account, Prime Minister Kaifu told Prime Minister Mulroney that Japan is trying to build on the lessons of the war. He said:

"we have shown our contrition. We feel very rigorously contrite about the unbearable sufferings and hardships that were brought upon the peoples of the Asian Pacific by the acts of the Japanese state."

At a news conference a little later, Prime Minister Kaifu said:

"I expressed this feeling very candidly to Prime Minister Mulroney. By saying that I expressed my apologies for the unbearable sufferings and the pains that were caused by the Japanese state against the Canadian people who experienced such sufferings in the Asian Pacific at the hands of the Japanese state."

Yet so far the Japanese Government have refused to offer compensation to second world war prisoners of war on the

[Sir Bernard Braine]

ground that the peace treaties signed in 1951-52 terminated Japan's obligations. That was what I was told by the Minister who answered my Adjournment debate in 1988—that the matter was concluded by the peace treaty signed in 1951 within a few short years of the ghastly happenings that I have described.

If we are talking solely about apologies, what about apologies to the other five nations whose men suffered grievously? The pleas of veterans of six nations were received by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. What about an apology to British, American and Australian veterans? Incidentally, a higher proportion of American and Australian prisoners than British in the far east died at the hands of their captors. What about an apology to New Zealand and Dutch veterans? And while we are about it, what about an apology to the civilians of all six nations who had the misfortune to fall into Japanese hands?

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister who is to reply to this debate that what the Japanese did was in defiance of all the normal usages and conventions of war. They disgraced themselves before the world. I do not want to hammer them now—I want them to respond and to show that they are civilised. I expect the Governments of the six nations whose ex-service men have appealed to seek such a response from the Japanese. There are subtle ways of showing our intense displeasure to the Japanese Government, but this should be done.

As I understand it, the Japanese Prime Minister is to attend an economic summit meeting in London next month. May we therefore expect a similar apology here? I should state right away that apologies are not enough when we consider the agonies endured by the survivors, and by the widows and the children of those who did not return. Apologies—the Japanese Prime Minister must be joking, and if so, it is a joke in the worst possible taste from him or from any Government. Or perhaps he is sincere —if so, we shall see. Many of the victims are still alive today. Their families and friends cry out for justice.

It must be said, however, that in regard to today's Japanese, we are dealing not with a brutal military dictatorship responsible for the monstrous crimes against humanity that I have described, but with a people who have embraced parliamentary democracy, whose inventiveness and industrial efficiency have made them rich and respected. We must be fair about this. The opportunity is there for them to make a generous recompense and to demonstrate that today's Japan is a truly civilised and responsible member of the world community.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I hope that he will not, like his predecessor, say that the matter was closed by the signing of the 1951 treaty. It was not closed then, and it is not closed now. This is a grave issue about which not only the victims are still understandably bitter, but many people in our country and in five others. There cannot be one hon. Member of this House who has not encountered in his constituency someone who went through that bitter experience or met a widow of someone who did not return.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I have been listening intently to my right hon. Friend and I congratulate him on securing this Adjournment debate and on the way in which he has presented his case. I am one of those to whom he referred who was born after these atrocities occurred.

I do not for one moment suggest that the boot could ever have been on the other foot, but were it on the other foot I have no doubt that hon. Members of this House would have responded generously in the way in which my right hon. Friend is suggesting that the Japanese Government should respond. I have constituents who have been caused to write to me to speak of the suffering that my right hon. Friend described so graphically to us tonight. They experienced that suffering. They express great support for his efforts.

The Japanese Government gave substantial support to the effort in the Gulf earlier this year. Substantial sums of money were paid. Does my right hon. Friend agree that some similar response is desirable and appropriate, bearing in mind that this year we were dealing with the horrors of the tyrant, Saddam Hussein, and we now have to put right the need for recompense for the horrors of what happened in the early 1940s?

Sir Bernard Braine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generous reference to what I have said. I agree wholeheartedly with him. It is true that the Japanese, like other nations, made a contribution to the efforts of the coalition—which, incidentally, included some Arab nations—to deal with Saddam Hussein. That is not the subject of this debate, but it is a great tragedy that in the brilliant military operation against the world's fourth largest army—an army equipped with sophisticated weapons by nations which should have thought twice about it—hostilities were called off when just a few short days more would have allowed Saddam Hussein to be dealt with. One of the most tragic events is what happened then to the Kurds in northern Iraq. I understand that that subject may be raised later this evening, and I am glad that that is so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) put his finger on it. As more and more people become aware of the details of what our men went through, they will become more and more angry. My hon. Friend the Minister should bear in mind that many people in Britain and in the other five countries are deeply concerned. I give a warning—that if the Japanese choose to ignore the action taken by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, public opinion around the world will react.

My next point may sound like a diversion, but it is not. I ask the Minister to recall the extraordinary happenings in eastern Europe in the past two years. People power exerted itself successfully against cruel tyranny. A distinguished British observer, who happened to be in Berlin when the wall came tumbling down, and in Budapest and Prague at the crucial time in those cities, said of the peaceful revolutions which took place:

"no Bastilles were stormed, no guillotines were erected and lamp-posts were used only for lighting the streets."

We still do not fully comprehend the extraordinary developments that took place as communism tumbled in eastern Europe. I know some of the countries well, yet I never thought that the end of communist tyranny in eastern Europe would come so soon.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): My right hon. Friend has already acknowledged my interest in the far east prisoners of war from south-east Essex, where we both

live. My right hon. Friend is coming to the end of his speech. Is he aware that time is not on the side of the people to whom he refers? Many of the men whom we both know were strapping young chaps of 20 in 1941. They are now 70. While it is a miracle that they have survived at all, they are entering the twilight of their lives and if action is not taken speedily it will be too late for them to benefit from anything that my right hon. Friend is attempting to achieve. For all the men who were 20, there were others who were 25, 26 or 27, who had wives in Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Holland or America. Many of those women were widowed and never married again. Many of them brought up their children or led their lonely lives without any assistance from anyone. They were five or six years older and are now in their mid 70s. Time is important for them, too. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is urgent that any action that is taken should be taken immediately?

Sir Bernard Braine: I entirely agree. That is what I have been saying for years. I said it soon after the end of the second world war. I was out there and saw some of the suffering as our men came out of Japanese prison camps. It is not to me but to Governments that my hon. Friend's question should be put. That is the purpose of raising the matter on the Adjournment today.

I am perfectly well aware of the advancing years. If I was a youngster when I joined the Army at the beginning of the second world war, I am not exactly a youngster now. None of us knows how much time we have. The reason why I listed the injuries and sufferings of a small number of the people who were prisoners of the Japanese was that I wanted to make people realise, not only in the House but in the nation as a whole, that the men who survived all that are walking miracles. When one knows someone as I do, and has listened to that person's private griefs and sorrows and witnessed his sufferings, it brings tears to one's eyes.

Not I but Governments must be impressed—and that means the Governments in Britain and in Canada. I should like to know what Canadian veterans intend to ask Prime Minister Mulroney. What response did he make to the Japanese Prime Minister? I understand that they are already asking that question. The same will happen in the Netherlands, the United States, and certainly in Australia and New Zealand. It is not to me that the questions should be addressed. I do not have to be convinced—all my political life I have fought against injustice wherever I have found it, and I have found it sometimes in Britain. The purpose of an Adjournment debate is to bring to the attention of Parliament wrongs that have been done and not put right by the authorities. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and I know where his heart lies on this matter.

My hon. Friend interrupted me—I do not mind because it was a perfectly valid point—when I was saying that we have witnessed in Europe in the past two years people power being exercised against the authorities. If there is not a response by Governments—and first of all by the Japanese—that anger will be reflected by public opinion in the countries concerned. This is a democracy and people cannot be prevented from learning the truth. There is anger in the constituencies on this subject and I hope that, as a result of this debate, many more people will start asking why we have had to wait all these years for something to be done.

I hope, therefore, that when the Japanese Prime Minister comes to London for the economic summit, he will apologise to us, too. If an apology can be made to Canada, it can be made to the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands. That will be the beginning, however, not the end—we want not just words of contrition, but generosity of spirit and practical compensation. If the Japanese, now the second richest nation on earth, could make a contribution while others did their fighting for them in the Gulf, they can find the money to make decent reparation to men who have suffered long years of ill health and deprivation as a result of the treatment that they received from the Imperial Japanese army.

I trust that the Minister appreciates that this grave matter will not go away and that there are many people in the House and vast numbers outside who will weigh his every word.

8.1 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I support and endorse much of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said. I wish at the outset to express a personal, family interest. The Burma Campaign was my campaign in which my father, brothers and cousins were deeply involved. I never quite forgave the British Government for not acknowledging VJ day in the way in which they acknowledged VE day. Our army was the forgotten army—the 14th Army—and one of my cousins had the misfortune to be imprisoned by the Japanese.

People may say that it happened a long time ago. To me, in my lifetime, it was not all that long ago. The Cambridgeshire regiment suffered particular misfortune, and there were not too many survivors. Unlike my right hon. Friend, I do not feel any real vindictiveness over what happened to my family, although, in a way, the survivors never really survived, even if they survived physically. The damage was very deep, lifelong and permanent.

Neither I nor my father nor my brothers had any feeling of hatred against the Japanese people. Even so, the rules of war—there is a thin veneer separating barbarism from the notion of civilisation—were cruelly broken and people and their relatives were deeply injured. An outrage was committed.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point asked for an apology. I was in Canada in recent weeks when an apology was given to the Canadian people. I do not think that such an apology is necessarily right. I should have thought that my Japanese friends, recognising the enormity of what was inflicted, would respond generously to the few survivors of that agony and would, in doing so, not only want to wipe the slate clean on an unhappy past but would wish to represent to a new generation the thought that things have changed, that there is a new Japan and that there is a new relationship between our people.

8.4 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): In his inspiring and excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) referred to the captivity experienced by many civilians in the far east. In October 1988 I had the privilege of attending a reunion of 350 people in my constituency. The gathering was held

[Sir Geoffrey Pattie]

there because a remarkable lady named Mrs. Renee Cumberbatch, who herself suffered incarceration, organised the event. I met people who had come from various parts of the world and whose spirit and resilience were magnificent.

Mrs. Cumberbatch was 22 when she was sent with her five-month old baby daughter to a camp by the Japanese. She had been forcibly separated from her husband. In the camp—she wrote these details later in a report—sanitation was poor, daily meals comprised a bowl of Japanese-style porridge, thin stew, black bread and gruel and she emerged after less than a year weighing about six stones, despite being nearly 6ft tall.

One could cite many examples of that type of suffering. I am anxious to put on record the fact that, in addition to the appalling suffering experienced by our military prisoners of war, there were, in terms of the British—and many others from other nations—about 8,000 people caught up in those appalling events. We should remember them in supporting what my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point has asked for tonight.

8.6 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) for raising this topic. I was a schoolboy aged 11 when war broke out. My mother was chairwoman of the Prisoners of War Relatives' Association. As the House knows, a substantial part of the Cambridgeshire regiment went straight to Singapore and was immediately captured, having hardly any opportunity to fight.

Throughout my childhood years during the war our family house was full of parcels destined for that area. Only a relatively small number of parcels got through, but my recollection as a teenager is of the walking very tall, emaciated, rather yellow British men of the Cambridgeshire regiment who came to thank my mother. Although she was only part of the team, her name was on the parcels, being the chairwoman of the organisation. They came to thank her because, although only a relatively small proportion of parcels got through, they had saved a considerable number of lives.

We cannot go on living in the past. We must look to the future. That is why I hope that, with the enormous prosperity that Japan enjoys—because of the hard work, assiduity and skills of the Japanese people—that country will respond with magnanimity to the representations that have been made in the House. Then we can get away from the past and start looking to the future. The Japanese have great wealth and large numbers of them have great generosity of spirit. If we can get rid of this problem of the past once and for all, a great service will have been achieved for the civilised community.

I hope that the Minister will echo that sentiment when he replies to the debate. I hope that we can get rid of that aspect of the past by a generous response from the Japanese. In view of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point said, hopefully we can put it all behind us and look to the future by co-operating in making the world a better and more prosperous place.

8.9 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I, too, pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) for having raised this subject on the Adjournment and for the passion and sincerity of his speech.

He and I jointly launched a book a few years ago on the experiences of a south-east Essex man as a Japanese prisoner of war. My right hon. Friend is also aware of the other books on the subject that have been written. I have just finished reading a book by John Cosworth entitled "Line of Lost Lives" which details clearly the privations suffered by the Cambridgeshire regiment, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). Many members of the Cambridgeshire regiment were captured at that time and suffered terribly at the hands of the Japanese.

Three years ago, a constituent of mine published a book called "Tamajo" which my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and I launched. Its author, Mr. Ernest Warwick, suffered badly at the hands of the Japanese and came out of a Japanese camp, as my right hon. Friend has described, broken in health. But the remarkable thing about such men is that they were not broken in spirit and managed to survive because their spirit was not broken. They received as much help as possible from the medical services of this country when they returned.

As a boy of 10 or 11 years old, I remember having my first post-war holiday on the Lincolnshire coast when my father returned from the war and seeing those gaunt, skeletal men trying to feed themselves back up. They spent no more than a half an hour in the garden before they were fatigued and would return to the house to try to sleep and to get more food.

My constituent and many others like him, who returned to this country in the late 1940s and had fine medical treatment, are often denied the compassion that they deserve when they go before medical boards and are declared 5 per cent. disabled. They are severely disabled from the privation that they suffered in Japan.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister ensure that substantial compensation will be made by the Japanese? We, too, need to be more compassionate in medical and social security terms to those who have suffered, and not just dismiss their complaints as the aches or pains of old age. They are far more serious than that—they are the aches and pains of suffering, anguish and of seeing their friends die. I hope that, as well as expecting the Japanese to make compensation, we shall show more compassion than we have in the past to our fellow country men and women who suffered incarceration by the Japanese for a number of years.

8.12 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I am among the last to rise because further speeches are superfluous and I am not sure whether anything could improve on the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). However, it struck me as he spoke that there has been little pressure in this country for the cause that he so well espoused. At first sight, that is surprising. I then recalled my uncle, who is the sole survivor of a squadron. He is alive and well—more or less—and in his 70s. He has written and contributed to two books and there is an

account of his war years in the Imperial War museum. I have never heard him ask me, as a Member of Parliament, "Please will you do something?"

As the sole survivor of a squadron, my uncle can recount crossing the sea by a boat on which hundreds of people were packed, knowing that by the time it arrived, very few would be alive. He, too, was beaten and had his nails pulled out and he escaped more than once. Moreover, he has had all the diseases. At the end of the war, he left Japan with a man who went mad. People who have been through such experiences do not complain or besiege Members of Parliament morning, noon and night, asking for help. The aspect that I remember most about my uncle is that, despite all the terrible traumas that he has endured, he does not complain. Those who died all around him cannot complain.

There is a new mood of reconciliation between countries throughout the world. We hear today that the Bulgarians have admitted the deliberate killing of Mr. Markov in the Strand. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point is responsible for great work with the Soviets, trying to get them to admit to the most awful crimes perpetrated in modern history. Last week, I was in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and I know that Germany is remorseful about the atrocities of the second world war and the holocaust. Perhaps the time has come for the Japanese to show similar remorse. It is not too late and they should not be misled by the fact that the clamour has not been enormous in this country because of people like my uncle, who have not been inclined, out of concern for their lost friends and because so many people are not here to raise that clamour.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, who will no doubt meet Mr. Kaifu when he comes shortly, will pass on the excellent speech made by my right hon. Friend and the depth of feeling that exists in the House and in the country among those of us who know of or are closely related to those who suffered so grievously at the hands of a nation. I hope that Japan will wish to purge its wrongdoing by making further recompense as is now requested by the House.

8.18 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I, too, add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) for raising this issue again and for keeping it before the House. He was absolutely right to say that the issue will not go away. Clearly, I was not in the war—I was not even born when it finished—but my father was. He was in Burma but, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, although he suffered he never complained. He does not talk about the war and asks for nothing. Such people should be given compensation by the Government and the nation.

The issue will not go away because my generation, too, will keep the issue alive. Will my hon. Friend the Minister ensure that when the Japanese Prime Minister comes to this country he will raise with him the issue of unit 731, which committed hideous, outrageous and evil experiments on prisoners of war? Members of that unit knew what they were doing and their actions were deliberate and evil. Moreover, the perpetrators are alive and living in Tokyo, and the Japanese Government know who they are. Some of them have been honoured for work in various fields. I find that deeply offensive.

The House in its wisdom has decided to proceed with war crimes trials. I disagree with that decision; but in order to be consistent, if we are prepared to deal with men whose actions 50 years ago were so appalling that we believe it right to act on their consequences now, it is no good saying at the same time that actions that took place in Japan or Asia 50 years ago should be forgotten. If the House is to be consistent and respected, we must treat war crimes in the same way whether they were perpetrated by Lithuanians living here or by Japanese living in Tokyo. The principle is the same.

If we are to believe, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) told the House, that there is a new Japan, let us look for a genuine act of contrition and repentance by the Japanese Government and people. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point said, a sincere apology is not enough. We want generous financial compensation—and from Japan even generous is not enough in my opinion. We must judge whether there is a new Japan by its actions and attitude. If the Japanese Prime Minister still cannot offer an apology or compensation, we must draw the conclusion that there is no new Japan—that for some extraordinary reason the Japanese are denying their crimes still and are not prepared to face up to the horrors of what they did. That in itself would be a shame and a sham.

8.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): Towards the end of his speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said that the purpose of an Adjournment debate was to raise matters of this kind. I wholeheartedly agree. It is one of the strengths of our democratic procedures that these Adjournment debates should exist. I am sure that they do not exist in every other democratic country, but in our system they mean that issues of the sort that my right hon. Friend has brought before us, in a speech which inspired eight colleagues to speak in his support, are debated in the House.

Before I comment further on my right hon. Friend's speech, I want to mention what my other hon. Friends had to say. Many of their comments were based on family experiences in one way or another. I was born in 1943. All of us of my age know from relatives and friends and other contacts of the suffering that so many people endured in the Japanese camps. I was impressed by the family experience recounted by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) in a speech that was quiet and gentle, and without bitterness.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) mentioned civilians, a group who should not be forgotten in these tragic stories. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) spoke of his childhood experiences and of the Cambridgeshire regiment. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) made a point about disability boards and the compassion that should be shown in these cases. I offer him this guarantee: I shall report his comments to my ministerial colleagues in the Department of Social Security.

We were all moved by the contribution of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who spoke of his uncle. He pointed out the remarkable fact

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

that people who have suffered such great traumas have survived and found their lives made more easy by showing a quiet courage without complaint. I sense that they derive some comfort from not complaining because it is easier for them to live their lives if they do not remember too much about the dreadful suffering that they saw and endured.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) referred to constituency interests, and there were two interventions by my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Rochford.

We were all shaken by the facts about which my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point reminded us. People who are as young as I am have read of these stories, and anyone in his late forties, like me, will have had an upbringing of roughly the same experiences. Quite apart from the graphic detail provided by my right hon. Friend, I was not properly aware before of the fact that for so many of these wretched and unhappy people the horrors that they suffered continue even today.

My right hon. Friend is assiduous in many cases about which he feels strongly, and he has been assiduous in this one for a number of years. I fear, however, that it will be no easier for me than it was for my predecessors to give him a more encouraging reply, but I can at least deal with the matter rather more fully than if we had had a mere half-hour in which to deal with it. I can touch on some of the recent developments of importance that have arisen since this matter was debated in 1988.

If my comments appear inadequate, I hope that my right hon. Friend will accept that that does not mean that the Government are unaware of or insensitive to the feelings of those whose suffering has given rise to this debate. I would not dissent from what my right hon. Friend said about the dreadful experiences of those who had the misfortune to be taken prisoner by the Japanese. We have said many times—I make no apology for repeating it tonight—that we must never forget the appalling conditions under which they were incarcerated or the fact that it was their sacrifice and service which allowed us the privilege of discussing their plight in a free Parliament.

The courage and selflessness shown and the awful hardship suffered by these men and women are indelibly marked on all our memories. My right hon. Friend has first-hand experience of the relevant period of the war, but for his generation and mine alike, the events that he has described tonight are a powerful reminder both of the heights of bravery and of the depths of cruelty of which man is capable. That is why I have profound sympathy with the distress and anger that many survivors of that terrible period continue to feel.

Letters from those who lived through that time or from their relatives are regularly received by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They convey in graphic terms the physical and mental suffering which many people continue to endure. The fact that Japan, which inflicted such suffering, is now a successful and prosperous country must add to the bitterness of those people. I completely understand and respect their strong conviction that the additional compensation for which my right hon. Friend has eloquently argued should now be made available.

I shall set out again the settlement reached in 1951 in the peace treaty with Japan. I do not suggest that it is a tidy bureaucratic solution to the problem and brooks no opposition, but simply set out the historical facts of the matter. As my right hon. Friend and other hon. Members know, the peace treaty signed in San Francisco on 8 September 1951 contained a specific provision for compensation for former prisoners of war. We had insisted on that provision, which had not been included in the original treaty, because we thought it important that the treaty should recognise the cruel and barbaric treatment to which allied service men in the far east had been subjected.

The negotiations leading to the treaty were heavily influenced by the moving debate in the House in May 1951, with which my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point is familiar. That debate helped to develop the Government's policy and negotiating position as the treaty was drawn up. No one could dispute that the issue of compensation was crucial and it was the only aspect of the treaty on which a debate was held prior to its signing. The 1951 treaty ended the state of war between the United Kingdom and Japan.

I shall briefly outline the provisions that are relevant to the debate. I know that I am repeating some of the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury when he replied to the 1988 debate on this subject. Article 14 of the treaty recognised

"that Japanese should pay reparations to the Allied Powers for the damage and suffering caused by it during the war".

The treaty gave the allied powers the right to seize and dispose of Japanese property within their jurisdiction. Article 14(b) concluded:

"Except as otherwise provided in the present Treaty, the Allied Powers waive all reparations claims of the Allied Powers, other claims of the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of any actions taken by Japan and its nationals in the course of the prosecution of the War".

Article 16 is central to the matter, because it provided specifically for the compensation of prisoners. It states:

"As an expression of its desire to indemnify those members of the armed forces of the Allied Powers who suffered undue hardships while Prisoners of War of Japan, Japan will transfer its assets and those of its nationals in countries which were neutral during the war, or which were at war with any of the Allied Powers or, at its option, the equivalent of such assets, to the International Committee of the Red Cross which shall liquidate such assets and distribute the resultant fund to appropriate national agencies for the benefit of former Prisoners of War and their families on such basis as it may determine to be equitable."

From the disposal of Japanese property within its jurisdiction, the United Kingdom received just over £3 million. The United Kingdom's share of the £4·5 million that the Japanese Government placed at the disposal of the International Red Cross in accordance with article 16 of the treaty was just over £1·6 million.

It was agreed in a minute between the Japanese and the allied powers that the payment of the £4·5 million would be recognised as a full discharge by the Japanese Government of their obligations under article 16 of the peace treaty. As is well known, and as my right hon. Friend has said, the sum of £76 paid to service men or to their dependants was unbelievably small. No British Government have ever denied that. In the debate on the peace treaty before its ratification, a Government spokesman said that he would have preferred to be able to offer greater compensation. I am sure that all members of the Government and the Opposition at that time shared that wish. As my right hon. Friend knows, the treaty was signed by a Labour Government and ratified by their Conservative successors.

I sympathise with my right hon. Friend's contention that the settlement was unsatisfactory but, as my predecessors have said, the provisions of the treaty remove any possibility of the British Government claiming further compensation or reparations from the Japanese Government. That is our best understanding of our legal obligations, although I hear with respect my right hon. Friend's different views.

We are not alone in that understanding. We have been in touch with our missions in the countries that my right hon. Friend mentioned to ascertain the position of their Governments. Other allied powers share our view that the question of compensation was settled by the 1951 peace treaty. However inadequate the terms may appear now or appeared at the time, it was accepted that the Japanese had fully discharged their obligations.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am listening carefully to my hon. Friend, and I am not surprised at anything that he has said so far, because he is basing his reply on legal considerations. In 1951, Japan's economy had been affected by the war and by Japan's defeat. The pitiful compensation was paid out of assets that we had seized when, without declaring war, Japan attacked the United States, the British, French and Dutch in the far east.

Forty years on, we are not talking about a defeated nation but one which is the second richest in the world. Down Whitehall, every third or fourth car is Japanese. Japan is doing very well out of the free world. I am arguing not on purely legal grounds but on moral grounds. If the Japanese have any honour, they will recognise that, since 1951, thousands of ex-service men have endured 40 years of suffering. I am talking not about the dead, although they are not forgotten, but about men who, since the signing of that peace treaty, have lived in agony and are sleepless at night. God knows how many of them continue to live.

We are talking about 40 years on. The Japanese put up their hands and say, "We signed the peace treaty all those years ago and that is the end of it", and my hon. Friend says that that is the legal position and that is what we must accept. That is not good enough.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been describing the 1951 peace treaty. I shall say something later about the change in Japanese circumstances since the war. I reiterate that I was describing the 1951 peace treaty, but my right hon. Friend will be aware that that does not mean that the Government will impede or obstruct in any way the private attempts of any group to obtain further compensation. The Government could not directly associate themselves with such attempts, but we have every sympathy with their aim.

I should not give my right hon. Friend any reason to believe that the chances of success of claims for further compensation are likely to be good, but I shall touch upon a recent development to the claim lodged with the United Nations Commission for Human Rights by the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association. It was lodged under a procedure known as resolution 1503, on which my right hon. Friend made comment.

I shall go into a little detail about the procedure. It is a confidential system that is designed to establish, on the basis of personal petition, whether there has occurred a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights by states rather than to adjudicate on individual complaints. There is no obligation on the Japanese Government to pay compensation to complainants under the procedure.

It gives me little comfort to refer to what must be regarded as cold legal technicalities. Indeed, my right hon. Friend intervened to make that very point. I can say, however, that I hope very much that the Japanese Government will respond to the petitions as sympathetically as possible.

I referred earlier to the bitterness that many must feel to see the country that was guilty of such cruelty and oppression two generations ago now so successful and prosperous and a member of the world community. The world has changed. That makes it even harder for the wounds inflicted at the time, for which, perhaps, no compensation can ever be entirely adequate.

It is important to understand the way in which Japan has changed, which my right hon. Friend has generously acknowledged, and why it has changed. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will allow me one more quotation from article 14 of the 1951 treaty. The contents of the article are not always remembered now. The passage states that:

"it is also recognised that the resources of Japan are not presently sufficient, if it is to maintain a viable economy, to make complete reparation for all such damage and suffering and at the same time meet its other obligations."

That was stated in 1951 because the negotiators of the treaty were acutely conscious of the terribly dangerous precedent that had been set after the first world war by the onerous burdens of the treaty of Versailles.

Of course, the negotiators had conflicting obligations. They had as far as possible to ensure an equitable settlement of manifest wartime injustice; they had to ensure also that the circumstances that led to the war were prevented from recurring. There may have been no very happy medium between the two responsibilities, but I do not think that we can easily ignore the imperative that lay behind the words that I have just quoted.

Japan is prosperous and successful and plays a constructive and responsible role in the affairs of the world, because the negotiators of the peace treaty were far-sighted enough to recognise the awful dangers of squeezing Japan as Germany had been squeezed after the first world war. In the 1930s and 1940s, Japan was a terrifying and brutal force in the region. As my right hon. Friend has rightly conceded, Japan is now democratic and peaceful. Its military strength once laid nations waste, but its economic strength now definitely contributes to their welfare and prosperity.

Sometimes, Japan is criticised for not making more contribution in terms of personnel and resources, as well as money, to the protection of the world order in which she herself has grown and prospered. That has been touched upon, for example, in terms of the recent crisis in the Gulf. However much it is right to encourage Japan to play a role in such affairs commensurate with its economic strength, we must recognise that the pacifism and self-restraint that holds it back from doing everything that we like to see was born of a determination among the Japanese never to allow themselves again to be seduced down the path of totalitarian oppression and aggression overseas. We welcome that commitment to peace and justice and must remember that it owes its strength to the spirit of magnanimity and conciliation that infused the treaty of peace that was signed 40 years ago.

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

My right hon. Friend said that there is a growing recognition in Japan of some of the harrowing truths which he has described. I believe that a growing sense of contrition is being expressed in Japan for the atrocities which were committed. Most Japanese today were born after the end of the second world war. Many others were too young at the end of the war to have played any substantial part in it. It is right that the new generations should know enough of the evils of the past to ensure that they are never repeated. It is equally right that we should never forget our debt to the generation which, as my right hon. Friend recalled, defended our freedom in that war.

It is a matter of the deepest regret to me that I am prevented from giving a more positive response to the questions that my right hon. Friend raised. I have tried to explain the Government's views of the underlying principles that bear on the issues. These are not questions that can be debated in terms of political expediency. I hope that my right hon. Friend will accept that my response, however discouraging it must seem, is meant to convey a spirit of great respect for the memory of the men and women whose almost unimaginable suffering we have been discussing.

Mr. Lawrence: Before my hon. Friend concludes his reply—has he done so?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall respond to my hon. and learned Friend——

Mr. Lawrence: I think that we were waiting to hear from my hon. Friend, even to the very end of his reply, that he would do his best to ensure that one of our Ministers will raise the debate and the tenor of it with Mr. Kaifu and his team when they come to London in the near future. I agree that there may be some legal justification for Japan saying, "That was the agreement, that is what we were bound to and we can or will go no further." However, is not true remorse something that prompts one to do something that is over and above that which the law requires to be done? It would be most heartening to us——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. and learned Member has already addressed the House once. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Lawrence: I will be, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We are asking that my hon. Friend the Minister will say to Mr. Kaifu and his team that true recompense means doing more than the law requires.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine: I shall be very brief and very much to the point.

We are to have a visit from the Prime Minister of Japan. I do not expect my hon. Friend the Minister to go into any detail on what the Japanese Prime Minister should be told, but common sense and common justice demand that the intense feeling that exists in this country, especially among those who know what happened, should not be disregarded, and that what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said a moment ago will be taken to heart. The Japanese Prime Minister should be told in a discreet but determined way that there is a debt to be paid.

I do not care a damn about the legalities of the matter: I am concerned about the way in which, in 1951 when the Korean war was upon us and various other pressures were coming into play, a treaty was signed whereby our Government took upon themselves the responsibility for waiving claims against Japan in future——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that this is a serious matter, and I do not question the right hon. Gentleman's depth of feeling, but other hon. Members are waiting to address the House.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend was helpful enough to say that he did not expect me to reply in any detail, but I can assure him that his points have been noted.

Kurdish People

8.53 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I am grateful to have the second Adjournment debate this evening, and it follows in a timely fashion from the previous debate. It is chilling that both debates are about war and the outcome of war, and many of the discussions appear to be the same —for instance, the desirability of war reparations, which is also being discussed in relation to Iraq.

The moving debate that we have just heard clearly demonstrates man's inhumanity to man writ large—horrors, cruelty and indifference to suffering on a horrendous scale. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said that it was necessary to spell out those horrors, and that we must not forget. I wonder whether we ever learn anything from history, or whether the only lesson we learn from it is that we do not learn anything at all.

Wars are catastrophic. The right hon. Gentleman detailed the long-term effects on people's' lives produced by the second world war. We clearly understand that the consequences of war, including the war with Iraq, have already destroyed many lives and will continue to make many suffer, not least the Kurds, who have been persecuted by Saddam Hussein and Iraqi Governments over many decades. The situation continues to deteriorate.

The plight of the Kurds in Iraq at the hands of Saddam Hussein may no longer feature every night on our television screens, but no one should be fooled into believing that their plight has eased or improved. Safe havens—the Prime Minister's idea to encourage Kurds off the mountainsides away from the horrendous experiences and tragedies that unfolded at the end of the war with Iraq —should not lead us to believe that all Kurds are safe and back in their homes, their safety guaranteed by allied troops.

The impression created is that the Kurds have gone home, but alas that is far from the truth. They have moved to districts, many where there is a presence of allied troops, where they believe that they will be safe, but they have not necessarily returned to their homes. Half a million or more Kurds are in the no man's land on the border between Turkey and Iraq, and there are a million or more either in Iran or on the Iran-Iraq border. All those Kurds are unprotected and without aid.

There is a chronic shortage of aid, both in Iraq and Iran, to support and help the Kurds. We have seen and heard horrific reports from Iraq about the lack of medical supplies. We have heard of operations being conducted by doctors who are unable to wash their hands between operations and where flies hover over patients and settle on open wounds. There have been detailed reports of the lack of electricity and vital clean water, not to mention the lack of food and supplies that people need to live. The tragedy is truly appalling and the suffering is great.

Today, I spoke to the Iraqi relief co-ordination group, which works closely with the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development and regularly receives information from a range of groups including Oxfam, the Red Cross, the Refugee Council, Medical Aid for Iraq, Kurdish Relief, the Kurdish Cultural Centre and the Islamic Cultural Centre, to name but a few. They all say that they consistently receive reports from camps and districts where the Kurds are living in Turkey, Iran and Iraq where United Nations aid supplies are simply not getting through to those who desperately need them. Supplies of aid still fall desperately short of what is needed. For the Kurds in the south, nothing, or next to nothing, is getting through. The Kurds are not certain where the aid is going, but believe that it is being redirected—or intercepted—by Saddam Hussein.

The Kurds also say that their latest information is that in the next two days the supplies of chlorine left in Iraq will be exhausted. That means no clean water. Cholera, typhoid and other appalling infectious diseases are already widespread and many people do not have access to clean drinking water.

Worse still, the Kurds now fear a new genocide—a new war initiated by Saddam Hussein. I am deeply concerned that the signs and messages sent by the allies to Saddam Hussein are leading him to believe that he will soon be able to continue his appalling persecution of the Kurds unthwarted. The political background is complex, but we know that the only lasting solution to the problem that the Kurdish people face is a political one. I am told that in the past two weeks 60,000 Iraqi troops have amassed in the Sulimaniyah area, accompanied by 60 tanks from Kirkuk. That arises directly from comments made by the allies and it demonstrates clearly what Saddam Hussein's intentions are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) intends to contribute to the debate if he is able, and he will detail the appalling record of the resumption of Saddam Hussein's oppression of the Kurds and others in Iraq. The signals are that a new wave of atrocities is on its way to Kurdistan. The truth is that Iraqi Kurdistan may well now be on the precipice of a new period of oppression which is now building up.

The Kurds have made it clear that they want to see a democratic Iraq and, within that, an autonomous or confederated Kurdish area negotiated directly within a democratic Iraq. They are not looking for an independent Kurdistan.

At present, negotiations have been continuing in Baghdad between Kurdish representatives and the Iraqi Government and it had been hoped that an agreement would be reached with the Iraqi Government which would later be ratified internationally in some way, perhaps by a resolution through the United Nations which would specifically guarantee that the Kurds would be able to live in a democratic Iraq free from repression and in security. But the United Nations appears to have sent the wrong message again. It said in July last year through its ambassador to Saddam Hussein that an invasion of Kuwait would be an Arab affair and nothing to do with the UN—and we know how that situation unfolded. The UN is now saying that it must withdraw its troops by 15 June, and the number of troops in the area has already declined from 22,000 on 21 May to 20,000 now.

Saddam Hussein has seen that as an opportunity to drag his feet in negotiations with the Kurds so that the agreement will not be reached before the allied forces have left. Then he will no doubt terminate the discussions and move heavily against the Kurds. Negotiations have been caught on three main areas. There is the question of geographical boundaries for a Kurdish area and the question of guarantees and security for that area. There are also problems in relation to the constitution involving the apportionment of oil revenues. Perhaps more importantly, there is also the question of the Arabisation

[Ms. Dawn Primarolo]

that has gone on in Kurdish areas, where once-Kurdish towns have been cleared and populated by Arabs. The Iraqis have refused to include them in the debate. The Government need to go to the United Nations for more international pressure to be applied to Saddam Hussein to negotiate seriously and to make progress on the agreements with the Kurds for the establishment of a democratic Iraq.

As I have said, a solution is not possible unless it is a political solution. A political agreement must be achieved and the comments made by the United States representatives and forces of withdrawal have not helped that political process. Indeed, they may plunge the Kurds into persecution and another war, as I have outlined.

Let us not forget that it is not only Iraq which persecutes the Kurds. The Turkish president was in Paris yesterday lobbying and applying for membership of the European Community. In Turkey, the Kurds are not allowed to speak their own language except in the privacy of their own homes. They are not allowed to sing in their own language except at private parties. Education and publishing in the Kurdish language are banned, and there is an enforced 15-mile zone on the Turkey-Iraq border where forced removal of Kurds occurs, with no resettlement plans, so as to break the links between the Kurdish communities in Turkey and Iraq.

The Kurds are talking of returning to the mountains because they fear what Saddam Hussein plans for them. An article in *The Independent* earlier this week quoted American troops in the region. It said:

"'See that man in my car over there?' the American colonel asked . . .'I've tried to help him but I can't. When the Iraqis come back in here, they're going to kill him. But I can't get him out.'"

Thousands of people face that prospect under Saddam Hussein.

We plead with the Government that the Kurds, despite the absence of their plight from our television screens, must not be left with no protection against Saddam Hussein. Pressure must be applied through the United Nations and internationally to ensure that Saddam Hussein negotiates seriously on a political settlement. We need immediate and unequivocal undertakings that Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey will not be abandoned and a detailed strategy to ensure that massive aid gets through to those who need it.

There has been much talk of building a new world order. The previous Adjournment debate was on the consequences of a war 50 years ago. Surely we must have learnt that a new world order cannot be based on or grow from the horrors, indifference, persecution and slaughter of the Kurds in Iraq. I press the Minister as hard as I can to send a clear message from the House that we shall not desert the Kurds and that they will be supported positively and continuously in their struggle to establish a free, democratic Iraq.

9.7 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on securing this Adjournment debate. It could not be more timely to have a debate on the plight of the Kurds, because the history of the past 70 years shows that there has been a profound lack of discussion by the House of Commons and successive British Governments of the situation facing them.

I am not a newcomer to the subject as I have been heavily involved in issues affecting Kurdistan since I became a Member of the House. Many Kurdish people from Iran, Iraq and Turkey who have sought asylum here have made their homes in my constituency. The way in which the Kurdish people have been treated is one of the great injustices of the century. We witness on television, which was not available to earlier generations, the horror of life for many Kurdish people, such as the easy death of so many young Kurds, the abject poverty in which many of them live and the profound ignorance of the rest of the world of their plight.

The Kurds should be living in an area the size of France, but their population of more than 20 million is largely ignored by the rest of the world. The Ottoman empire collapsed at the end of the first world war, and the Kurdish people, mainly through accidents of geography and topography, enjoyed a semi-autonomous existence.

The Kurdish people have brought much learning to the world. Saladin himself was a Kurd. Kurdistan produced many other heroic people. At the end of the first world war it was hoped that the Kurdish people would receive justice. The treaty of Sèvrres, which was signed in 1920 but not ratified, contains three crucial articles. Article 62 made reference to a commission sitting in Constantinople, composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments, to determine the boundaries of Kurdistan.

In article 63, the Turkish Government agreed to accept and execute the decisions of the commission mentioned in article 62 within three months of their communication. Article 64 dealt with the recognition of that arrangement by the then League of Nations. That treaty was the source of some hope and provided an opportunity for the Kurdish people but, tragically, it was never ratified. Instead, Mustafa Kemal led the development of the modern state of Turkey, and the British Government decided to back modern Turkey rather than the aspirations of the Kurdish people. The RAF undertook chemical bombardments of the Barzani-led Kurdish separatists in 1922. Britain has very bloody hands in the history of Kurdistan and of the Kurdish people.

The treaty of Lausanne, which was ratified in 1923, expunged from the record anything to do with Kurdistan or the Kurdish people. Kurdistan was obliterated from the modern political map.

There is something very tragic about Kurdish history and the way in which national movements developed in each of the countries in which Kurdish people lived—Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. In every case, there has been manipulation of the Kurdish people. Iranian Kurdish people are backed by Iraq. Iraqi Kurdish people are backed by Iran. Turkish Kurdish people are backed by Iraq, and so on. The awful circle continues. The Kurdish people are the losers every time.

There have been notable assassinations, including that of Dr. Ghasamlou, the leader of the Kurdish people in Iraq, who was disgracefully murdered by Iranian agents while trying to negotiate on behalf of his people in Switzerland. Many others died in the same cause.

I hope that even now, in the midst of the horrors of the aftermath of the Gulf war, it will be recognised that a tragedy that has occurred repeatedly over the past 70 years must not arise again in the coming months and years.

It is deeply moving to talk to Kurdish people. One finds Kurdish people in almost every city in the world. They say, "Yes, I am a Kurd. I do not have a country, I do not have a language and I do not have a literature that the world recognises." But when Kurdish people come together to hear the singing of Sivein Perver, a marvellous entertainer if ever there was one, who attracted 3,000 people to Kensington town hall for an nueroz celebration, which I attended, one realises the spirit and strength of the Kurdish culture, and the determination of the Kurdish people.

Many Kurds have been compelled to migrate to the cities, to do the dirty jobs that no one else will do. Many have sought political asylum in this country, as in others. Often, they have not been well treated. In 1989 Siho Iyuguven took his own life rather than be deported back to the horrors of the fascist regime in Turkey. I could cite many other examples.

I hope that, in the aftermath of the Gulf war, we will look again at the way in which the Kurdish people are treated. I was one of the Members of Parliament—and others are present in the Chamber tonight—who did not support the Gulf war in any way. We did not see that it would solve any of the problems of the region. One now sees oil wells on fire in Kuwait, marshal law imposed on the streets of Kuwait, destruction throughout Iraq, and the carnage of the Kurdish, Shia, and Syrian peoples, and many others, throughout Iraq. The scenario is one of a managed instability in the region.

The United States and Britain, having fought a war for the liberation of Kuwait, are making no discernible efforts to bring democracy to that city. They say that they are supporting the Kurdish people, and then withdraw; at no stage have they said that they recognise the Kurdish people's right to self-determination, although that is now a clear and necessary demand.

Both Mr. Barzani and Mr. Talebani have visited the House several times, and I have come to know Mr. Barzani quite well over the years. Both are at present negotiating in good faith in Baghdad—attempting, on behalf of the Kurdish front and the Kurds who wish to unite, to achieve a solution that would give autonomy to Kurdistan within Iraq. Their crucial need is for aid and recognition; but aid is in short supply, while recognition is in no supply at all.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein's forces are preparing once again to deal with what they describe as the Kurdish problem—that is, to impose Arabisation on Kurdish villages, just as the Turkish army has imposed "Turkification" on the Kurdistan villages in eastern Turkey, and just as Iran has done at various times in the past.

This is a tragedy of immense proportions. It has happened so many times before; now it is happening yet again. I hope that the Minister will recognise the justice of the Kurdish people's case, and will accept that there can be no peace in the region until the rights and demands of the Kurds are recognised internationally. Those who have died in the mountains—including the children who never came down from them—and those who are now dying of disease in the cities and camps in Iraq are victims of the whole awful process. They are victims of the carve-up of 1920; they are victims of the greed of oil companies and military powers; and they are victims of the latest Gulf war.

Those people need and deserve as much aid as can be conveyed to them. I am glad to say that aid is getting through to various parts of Iran and Iraq, and, to some extent, to Turkey, but it is not reaching all the Kurds. They are dying of preventable diseases, while the world watches on television screens and through television camera lenses. Something must be done, and action must be taken in the long term to prevent a repeat of this tragedy. I believe, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South, that that will indeed be prevented if the importance of the current Baghdad negotiations is recognised and the United Nations ratifies them after their completion.

Instead of snuggling up to the Turkish Government, as they have done so many times, the British Government should recognise that the treatment of the Kurds in Turkey is nothing short of abominable. The cosmetic changes to the laws that the Turkish Government have introduced in the past few months do not absolve them of responsibility for such a large Turkish army presence in Kurdistan. People whom I have met in villages on the Iraq-Turkey border have been arrested on a whim; their villages have been razed to the ground and their families moved miles away, because they have been deemed to threaten national security. That is not a civilised way in which to treat a people; there must be something better than that—something more.

I am not advocating a new Gulf war. I am advocating recognition of the Kurdish people, which would make it harder for any Iraqi Government to behave in this way—including the Ba'ath regime of Saddam Hussein, which was consistently opposed by some Opposition Members even when the Government were lending it money and allowing arms to be sold to it through the use of foreign currency.

I hope that tonight the Government will acknowledge the needs of the Kurdish people, who have suffered so tragically in the past 70 years. Their suffering must end; they must be able to live in peace and harmony with their own history and culture, which have contributed so much to the world.

9.19 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who has a long history of involvement in this problem. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) for taking the initiative in calling this debate in rather curious circumstances.

I want to bite deeply into what I consider to be at the heart of the whole affair—statements made by American and British politicians and by representatives of the American Administration, and the United Nations resolutions, how they interlock and how they should resolve the crisis in Kurdistan.

The principal resolution that we should consider tonight is resolution 688. It demands that

> "Iraq as a contribution to removing the threat to international peace and security in the region immediately ends this repression."

That resolution was carried shortly after the mass movement of population from the towns and cities of Kurdistan to the boundaries of Turkey and Iran. It

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

followed a statement by the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff in America, Mr. Colin Powell, on 31 March, in which he said:

"It would not be in the interests of the Government in Baghdad to return to this area in an aggressive way which would threaten these people"—

he was referring to the Kurds—

"and cause them to fear for their lives again. The Iraqis should not doubt America's resolve."

I believe that, at that time, that statement was a sign that the United States Administration understood the problem, that it would press for the United Nations resolution—which was pressed for and secured on 5 April—and that there would be subsequent resolutions to enforce resolution 688 in the event that the Iraqis breached the principle of no repression. However, that has not been the case.

I was further fortified in my view that action might be taken when, on 21 May this year—only a few weeks ago—the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), said to the Arab Research Centre that

"no-one can ever feel secure while Saddam Hussein remains in Baghdad—any more than we in Europe could have felt secure as long as Hitler survived in Berlin".

They are the words of a British Foreign Office Minister to an Arab audience in London, yet tonight I can refer to innumerable breaches of resolution 688 which have been ignored, and indeed denied, by the Government as late as today. During business questions, the Leader of the House said:

"There is no evidence that there is any systematic or widespread repression of the Kurds at present."

That is from a statement made by the Leader of the House today from a written brief. He continued:

"We are in close contact with other joint force members to agree ways of providing reassurance to the Kurdish population if and when forces are withdrawn."

I want to draw attention to the breaches which the Leader of the House says are not taking place, but which all the evidence suggests are taking place. I begin with what happened on May 13, when Iraqi forces fired on a United States helicopter and on British Marines inside the protection zone. Ministers were informed of that by field commanders. They know that it happened, and they know that the forces in question were involved in humanitarian aid relief efforts and in the protection of populations in the area. That is an example that has been denied today by a Minister at the Dispatch Box.

On 19 May, 570 people were rounded up and summarily executed in Babylon in a Shia area of the south. I ask the Minister to check the allegation that I make tonight. On 20 May, Iraqi forces attacked a Kurdish aid centre, killing and injuring Kurds. On 22 May, reports stated that up to 500,000 refugees were trapped by Iraqi army road blocks in the region of Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk. Could my allegations be checked? May we have an assurance from the Dispatch Box tonight?

On 23 May, whole areas of Kirkuk were levelled by the Iraqi army as part of its Arabisation programme. Kurdish lives were lost. That matter needs to be checked by Ministers. I was told today by the Leader of the House that, if I can prove or if it can be proved conclusively that the Iraqi Government breached United Nations resolution 688,

"we"—

that is the Government—

"would obviously consider making a statement to the House, and I can give him that assurance."

I am putting the evidence to the Minister. He can test the evidence, and when it has been substantiated perhaps we can have a Government statement on the matter.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I have been listening extremely intently to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that the House will be shocked but not surprised by the catalogue of atrocities that he has recounted. In a sense, was not that catalogue inevitable, when the allied high command decided not to force the unconditional surrender of Iraq, and particularly that of the leader of Iraq, President Saddam Hussein? The Minister of State drew the parallel with Hitler. In that instance, the allies rightly demanded the unconditional surrender of the Nazi regime. Should we not have done the same with Iraq? The future of the Kurds, the Shias and others would have been much brighter than it is today.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That would have been one solution, but not one that I would necessarily have supported. There are other ways—for example, a further United Nations resolution with the threat of force at a later stage, which would have had precisely the same effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South referred to 60,000 Iraqi troops. I understand that the Republican Guard are now located in the town of Salumaniya. I understand that they were used with tank forces to quell protesters. On 3 June, in Dahuk, Kurds were shot and killed by Ba'athist security party members. On 4 June—only a few days ago—United Nations relief officials reported that Kurdish refugees returning to Irbil had fled back to the Iranian border after Iraqi troops fired on a Kurdish crowd. Innumerable examples of aggression are being reported every day.

I draw the attention of the House to the house arrest and imprisonment of religious leaders, which were reported extensively in the western media and by Reuters on 9 May. I understand that they were Shias. I refer also to the desecration of holy places, the rounding up of clergymen, teachers and their families, and reports of secret police operations in Safwan, which I understand have been brought to the attention of the United Kingdom Government.

There have been reports of abductions in all areas where there is an Iraqi Government presence, and reports of the systematic destruction of Dahuk before the Americans went in. I understand that in that case the Americans were able to witness the damage after they arrived. This week, we have reports of Iraqi forces being deployed in the area of the southern marshes, near the town of Alamara. I understand that those forces have been deployed there with a view to the removal of the population currently living in very temporary conditions in the marshes.

Those incidents are violations of United Nations resolution 688. The Kurdish people are entitled to know what the Government's response will be. We certainly have an undertaking today that there will be a statement in the event that they can be substantiated.

I now refer to sanctions. I want the Government to know that there is a statement on the record to which many of us will hold the Prime Minister. It is a statement that he made on 10 May to the Conservative party conference in Scotland:

"Today at this conference I can give the country two assurances. First, Britain willl veto any UN resolution designed to weaken the sanctions regime we have set in place for so long as Saddam Hussein remains in power."

We want to be absolutely sure that there will be no weakening of that statement.

I understand that the Prime Minister's statement has been reinforced by statements in the United States. Marlin Fitzwalter, a White House spokesman, said on 21 May:

"The United States Government wants the Iraqi people to negotiate a new political compact. It"—

that is to say, the United States Government—

"will exert all possible sanctions against Baghdad until Saddam Hussein is removed from power."

That statement was qualified further by Robert Gates, who is an adviser on national security affairs. He said:

"Any easing of sanctions will be considered only when there is a new Government in Baghdad."

Those are clear statements. We do not expect Ministers to come to the Dispatch Box in the weeks or months to come and, while Saddam Hussein remains in power, say that, in light of the problems in Iraq, it is necessary to ease oil sanctions. That sanction is the Kurds' only hope of securing a democratic Iraq without Saddam Hussein at the helm.

That principle should be reaffirmed from the Dispatch Box. That will signal to the Kurds the resolve of the British Government and, together with the discussions that have been taking place in Washington—in which some of us participated when we visited that city recently—it will clarify the position for the Kurds and strengthen their resolve.

There has been discussion of an international guarantee. While Saddam Hussein is in power, it is utterly impossible for the Kurds to return to their towns and cities, without an international undertaking guaranteeing their future security. The Minister might wish to comment on that aspect of the affair tonight.

9.32 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) referred to the lack of aid for the Kurds and gave some harrowing examples of the present position. However, without denying that, I want to talk about the generosity of the British people in supplying aid to the Kurds—a generosity which has not been matched by the Government on behalf of the British people and has not been adequately assisted by the Government in terms of the organisation and resources that the Government could have offered to the voluntary organisations.

I am not referring to the Simple Truth concerts that were held seven weeks after the crisis emerged, although they were very praiseworthy. I want to stress the spontaneous and immediate response of the British people which occurred as soon as they witnessed the harrowing scenes of the Kurds going into the mountains in Turkey. In towns, neighbourhoods and villages up and down the land, without being asked, mobilised or organised by anyone, apart from one or two people who took initiatives in their own communities, people began to collect the kind of things that they felt the Kurds required. That happened from the beginning of April as soon as those scenes were broadcast on our television screens.

By 4 April, British Aid for the Kurds, one of the largest groups and voluntary organisations to assist the Kurds, had been established. It was established by Lorraine Goodrich from Devon, who had run an organisation called Parcels for the Gulf. She has received recognition for the work that she has done with Parcels for the Gulf. For example, she is included in a visit that is to take place to Buckingham Palace shortly in recognition of the role that she played. However, she cannot receive any mention from the Government or any recognition of the work that has been done by British Aid for the Kurds. When it came to supplying parcels to the troops, she was a heroine, but when it came to supplying aid to the Kurds, she was an embarrassment to the Government.

Parcels for the Gulf was a straightforward operation. Those who wanted to send materials out to troops carefully parcelled them up, organised them and contacted United Carriers, which said that it would handle the parcels free but in the event charged £2 for collecting up to 15 items, which were then transported. The Ministry of Defence had enough planes going out to the Gulf to be able to take the materials out there.

British Aid for the Kurds collected masses more material than Parcels for the Gulf, but it had massive logistical problems and needed assistance from the Government. It collected foodstuffs, blankets, medicines —which were supplied in response to lists drawn up by the Iranian embassy—and clothing. There is a myth around, which the Overseas Development Administration tends to perpetuate, that all the British Aid for the Kurds did was to collect clothing which turned out not to be needed. That is not the case. The clothing has been trans-shipped and is of value and in use, but the organisation has been involved in sending many other items. It collected tons and tons of material and then had to face the logistics of transporting it.

Transport was initially supplied free within Britain by the National Courier Service. Then Track 29, which works with British Rail and publicises its activities as a private haulage organisation linked with the railways, began to move the bulk of the material. According to Lorraine Goodrich, it was brilliant in the work and the organisation in which it was engaged.

However, it was not simply a matter of moving goods about Britain. As the goods could not be moved quickly, there were massive storage problems. People gave storage facilities. They included businesses, councils, individuals and in some cases, although not very often, the ODA. As it was taking time to ship goods, storage presented great problems. People who had made storage facilities available needed them back. They expected to hand over their facilities for only a week or so. The great problem became the movement overseas of the material that had been collected.

It was not until 24 April, 20 days after the organisation began its activities, that the first material was shifted out of Britain through Iran Air. Iran Air has a regular flight into Heathrow and a 747 was loaded full of material and sent out. Iran Air paid the landing fees for the Heathrow exercises. Although, after protests, the fee was lifted for special flights, the standard flights each Wednesday which have carried masses of material from British Aid for the Kurds have been subject to landing fees.

Only two ODA flights, or flights paid for by the ODA, have been provided for British Aid for the Kurds, but it was not recognised by the ODA that the material was from British Aid for the Kurds. A 707 flight went from Belfast. A 747 Iran Air flight from Heathrow was paid for by the

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

ODA. That was held to be material collected by the Iranian embassy. In fact, it was British Aid for the Kurds material.

I tabled parliamentary questions in an effort to discover what the Government and the ODA thought had been done by British Aid for the Kurds, but I got virtually a nil return, as though British Aid for the Kurds did not exist. I received a letter from Lord Belstead on behalf of the Northern Ireland Office showing that the material sent from Belfast had been collected under the aegis of British Aid for the Kurds, but that fact does not seem to have been recognised by the ODA.

There have been eight other Iran Air flights. The significance of those is that Iran Air has large 747s, whereas the British Government tend to hire only the smaller capacity 707s when material needs to be sent to such areas. There have been two overland trips with material, one to Turkey in mid-April and one to Iran on 25 April, paid for by the ODA.

In all, 527 tonnes of material has been sent from this country. A further 200 tonnes is at Heathrow and elsewhere. It could readily be moved by Track 29. British Aid for the Kurds believes that if it had not had to put the brakes on because of the difficulty of shifting material it could, without any problem, have collected three times more material, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South said, that material is urgently required in the area.

Next week, British Aid for the Kurds hopes to send out —through Iran, but for northern Iraq—a prefabricated building which will house a 40-bed hospital, with 40 lockers, 200 blankets, 400 sheets, 100 pillow slips, 100 towels and 100 sets of clothing, plus appropriate medicines that are urgently required. The organisation has had to engage in a special financial appeal—it had not previously been involved in collecting money—and has £5,000 from the Welsh organisation Kurdish Relief (Wales), which acts under its umbrella.

Judy Stubbs, of Cutthorpe in my constituency, a northern organiser for British Aid for the Kurds, wrote to the Prime Minister on 17 April offering the Government masses of materials free which they could ship to the Kurds. No answer has yet been received to that letter, although she was writing on behalf of that organisation.

The scale of the operation is revealed in parliamentary written answers to me. Up to 15 May, Save the Children had sent out 207 tonnes of material, Oxfam 143 tonnes and the Red Cross 290 tonnes—all valuable material which had been specifically purchased for special purposes, and I am not decrying that contribution. British Aid for the Kurds had by then sent out 478 tonnes of material. That was done with little publicity. There was no national publicity—the media blackout set me wondering whether a D notice had been applied to the organisation's activities —and only a limited amount of regional coverage.

I have tabled five early-day motions and several written questions about British Aid for the Kurds. In addition to questioning Ministers when statements have been made, I made a short speech in an Opposition day debate on the work of the ODA. There has been no public recognition by the Government of the work of British Aid for the Kurds, despite links with the ODA, to which I shall come.

The ODA has acted in the only way it can act, given the way it is established and the finances available to it, and that is in an ad hoc and limited fashion. That is no fault of the dedicated staff of the ODA disaster unit. Under pressure from the Labour party, the number of staff has risen from four at the start of the disaster to six. When the Bangladesh crisis arose the number rose to nine, and the latest figure of which I am aware is 12.

The Overseas Development Administration has a hangar containing collections of material to be sent to disaster areas. When disasters such as earthquakes occur, it sends out a couple of 707s and purchases food in the nearest local market. That is its usual contribution to disasters, but it has had on its hands three massive disasters for which it has special responsibility. Although the ODA has been trying to handle the problems by increasing its staff, it finds that the problems are beyond it because it is seriously underfunded and there is a lack of political will at Cabinet level to assist it. The ODA even has to pay the Ministry of Defence to take materials to Kurdish areas in the middle east.

The Government are terrified to be seen to have provided insufficient aid. On 9 May, I asked the Minister for Overseas Development for a meeting with British Aid for the Kurds but I have not yet received a reply to my letter. It took until 5 April for the first of the two usual 707 disaster relief flights to leave for Turkey. Not until 8 April did the first 707 fly out to Iran. By 27 April, only four 707s, taking out 35 tonnes each, had flown to Iran. It appears that nothing has ever been sent to Syria, although some 100,000 refugees found their way into that country.

The Prime Minister's initial response to the crisis was his famous remark that he did not recall anyone asking the Kurds to rebel. He then had to react against that statement and suggested a safe havens policy. It may be as well that he did, or the safe havens policy might not have emerged so quickly. The initial safe havens policy did not provide sufficient water, food, medical supplies and other necessities required by the Kurds. We were defending the Kurds, who were then dying from lack of food, supplies and cover in the most abysmal circumstances—in massive contrast with the facilities and organisation provided for the Gulf war, which destabilised Iraq and led to the problems.

When I wrote to the Prime Minister about those problems, I claimed that the Government's response was "tawdry". I do not know whether it was in response to that comment, but he then wrote to the United Nations claiming that its response was "tardy". The difference is that "tawdry" means showy, but worthless, which is exactly the Government's position, while "tardy" means slow to act, move or happen. Those are the definitions given in the Oxford reference dictionary.

The Government's response to the plight of the Kurds has been inadequate. They have tried to pretend that they have done something dramatic, but they have not met the basic humanitarian needs of the Kurds—and when people have moved to meet the needs, the Government have been embarrassed and have attempted to downgrade those actions.

It is not only the Government who have failed to make the necessary statements. To their great discredit, the mass media of this country have failed to pick up the fact that the British public were involved in these humanitarian acts. The British public are ready to respond to disasters

and they expect the Government to act automatically on their behalf and to help the organisations seeking to assist the Kurds and others involved in disasters.

Lorraine Goodrich's letter concludes:

"We have now also started an account for Africa after requests to do so from many of our contacts throughout the Country. We shall be taking the ODA's advice and United Nations' . . . on what they would like done with the money as and when the time arises."

This time, cash is to be collected to try to move matters along because it was found impossible merely to collect materials and goods and to rely on the Government then to move those goods.

9.50 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on choosing this subject for debate. She has chosen an opportune moment to talk about this subject. When I returned from the Iran-Iraq border in April and told the House what conditions were like at that time, I did not think that I would be talking about the plight of the Kurds again some two months later. I thought that the message would have got across to the Government by then and that, instead of depending on the Opposition—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the Minister is listening, as it is important that he replies to some of my points. It is not enough just to have a Whip on the Front Bench.

It is amazing that it is left to the Opposition to discuss in this House the plight of the Kurds. I congratulate my hon. Friends who have spoken in the debate—my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). They have all in turn touched on points of importance, and I ask the Minister to answer them this evening.

The plight of the Kurds is a matter of some anxiety to those of us who have a long record of discussing in this House the human rights of the Iraqi people. For seven years, I have chaired this country's Campaign Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq, and since I entered the House almost seven years ago, I have continually raised the matter in this place. Most of the time, my remarks have fallen on deaf ears. Even after the tragedy of Halabja, the Government continued to double export guarantees to Iraq. All that is water under the bridge, and I hope that our Government and other Governments have learnt from their experiences after 2 August.

Let us face it: until 2 August Saddam Hussein was one of this country's best friends. Whatever we said about violations of human rights in his country was ignored by the Government. It was all very well to make weak protests after the tragedy of Halabja; but to behave as though Saddam Hussein was a person to be trusted and whose friendship was to be valued was little short of a disgrace.

It is not good enough for the Government to wash their hands of the plight of the Kurds. It is amazing that we were given statements on the Gulf war almost every other day. It is surprising that the Government have not seen fit to make a statement about the Kurds. I do not recall any statements since the debate that we initiated a week before the recess on the way that the Government had dealt with the three major tragedies which had confronted them and the Overseas Development Administration. The response to those tragedies was completely inadequate. I would welcome an immediate statement on what the Government propose to do to secure the safety of the Kurds who have returned, those who are returning, and those who are still on the borders of Turkey and Iraq and Iran and Iraq.

There has been much coverage of the plight of the Kurds on the Turkey-Iraq border but little about the plight of those on the Iran-Iraq border. Perhaps it has escaped the notice of many people, since the pictures have disappeared from our screens and the cameras are concentrating on other issues, that there are still 1 million Iraqi refugees in Iran. This week the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees expressed concern for those people, and spoke particularly about what would happen to them if they returned to their homes. There has been little talk about what will happen to those people who do not even have access to the safe havens that are available to some people on the Turkey-Iraq border.

Thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people who attempted to leave Iraq during the Kurdish refugee crisis when they fled from the wrath of Saddam Hussein are trapped in a no-man's land between Iraq and Iran. They have not reached the Iranian border and are still on the borders of Iraq. They are staying in what can only be described as huge gipsy encampments on the rubble of some of the towns and villages that Saddam Hussein destroyed in 1987.

Those people are not in receipt of international aid either inside Iraq or on the borders. That is because they are not covered by any of the aid agencies and no aid, apart from that provided by people who have returned to the country, is available to them. Some of them are not able to return to their homes because the Iraqis have blocked the accesses to towns and villages. The Minister must address the problems of those people.

Apart from the necessity to increase aid and to meet the requirements of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other UN agencies that are calling for assistance, the Government must foresee what will happen when the allies leave the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington has documented the violations of the various resolutions that were passed by the Security Council. What do the Government intend to do to enforce those resolutions?

On 30 May I wrote to the Foreign Secretary asking him to say what date, if any, had been set for the withdrawal of British troops from Iraqi Kurdistan. I said that reports of an imminent allied withdrawal had caused grave anxiety among Kurdish refugees who had strong grounds to fear for their safety if allied protection were removed without the strongest possible international guarantees for their security. I have not received a reply to that letter. As many of my hon. Friends have said, we need tonight from the Government a clear and unequivocal statement that British troops will not be withdrawn from Iraqi Kurdistan until the safety of the refugees is guaranteed. It would help to reassure the refugees, speed up the process of resettlement and so enhance the prospects of an early withdrawal of British troops in the proper circumstances.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Mrs. Clwyd: Such a statement would discourage Saddam Hussein from deliberately stalling the talks with the Kurdish leadership in the hope that allied troops will

[Mrs. Clwyd]

eventually be removed before a satisfactory agreement on autonomy is reached. That is the fear of us all who have been in close contact with the Kurdish negotiators. It is felt that it is a deliberate tactic of Saddam Hussein to slow down the peace talks until the allies have left the country so that he can resume his repression of the Kurds and other groups within Iraq. Those of us who follow events closely believe that that is the tactic that he is following.

When I was in Iraq at the beginning of April I had a conversation with Jalal Talabani, who said that the Turkish leaders would be negotiating for autonomy for the Kurds within Iraq and for democratic elections for the whole of Iraq. The Kurds believe, as does everyone else, that there will be no safety for them, no peace and no stability—for them or any of the other oppressed groups of Iraq—unless there is democracy within the country. They would most of all like to see the removal of Saddam Hussein. That is true of those who are negotiating with him as well as of many of the other Iraqi opposition groups within Iraq. They feel, of course, that the rest of the world has let them down in their attempts to achieve that end.

Over the past six months I have attended many international conferences in Stockholm, Paris and Washington. I have no doubt that the Kurds were given a nod and a wink and much else besides, especially by the Americans, to go ahead and fight the forces of Saddam Hussein after the end of the Gulf war. It is to the shame of the west that it was not able to secure the safety of the Kurds when they were fighting the airpower of Saddam Hussein.

The Kurds are under no illusion that if they conclude an agreement with Saddam Hussein without international guarantees, and without ensuring that there are free and democratic elections for the whole of Iraq, they can never be secure in an Iraq in which Saddam Hussein remains. I hope that the Minister will apply his mind to the questions which have been raised.

I have no doubt that if the allies pull out of Iraq in the next few weeks, as it is believed they will unless the Minister can tell us otherwise, Saddam Hussein will resume his oppression and persecution of the Kurds and of other people within his country who are opposed to him. I mention especially the Shi'a, who are in particular difficulties, the Assyrians and many others who over the years have opposed Saddam Hussein within Iraq. They should not be forgotten because we are talking about the plight of the Kurds. I am certain that, unless we get assurances from the Minister tonight, this will signal the go-ahead for a new wave of repression, torture and killing in the country where so many people have suffered under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

Over the years I have raised these issues in the House. At times I did not believe some of the horror stories coming out of Iraq. I asked some of the people who came to me with those horror stories to check them out, but now I have no doubt that what they told me was an understatement of what was happening inside Iraq. It will be to our shame if we fail to heed what has happened in the past and do not ensure the protection of those persecuted people in Iraq in the future.

10.6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Lennox-Boyd): With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on raising this important and interesting subject, which has occupied many hon. Members from both sides of the House—for obvious reasons. It is a complicated matter which has already developed a considerable history during the past few weeks and months. I shall try to do justice to the contributions of Opposition Members, but I have some of my own comments to make, and I hope that Opposition Members will recognise that I should be entitled to do that in the time available to me.

As is well known, with our allies in the United Nations, we reacted swiftly to seek the backing of the whole international community in demanding that Iraq should stop the repression of its people and allow the humanitarian relief effort to proceed unhindered. The Security Council adopted resolution 688 on 5 April to do exactly that. The resolution condemned Iraq's repression of its civilian population, the consequences of which threatened the

"international peace and security in the region"

and demanded access by international humanitarian organisations. It went on to ask the Secretary-General to pursue his humanitarian efforts in Iraq, using all the resources at his disposal, and appealed to all member states to contribute to his efforts.

The hon. Members for Bristol, South, for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) talked about the aid levels. Since 4 April—during the past two months—the British Government have provided £62 million-worth of aid. Since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August, the total amount of aid given amounts to £81 million. That involves 100 United Kingdom volunteers working on the Turkish border, 510 tonnes of relief supplies flown to the Turkish border and 625 tonnes flown to Iran. I do not see how the hon. Member for Bristol, South can describe our response as lacking in substance.

Ms. Primarolo: The Minister will know that we contributed about £2·5 billion to £3 billion to the war and the liberation of the Kuwaitis, of whom fewer than 1 million were resident in Kuwait. He will also know that we are talking about considerably more Kurds than that. When I talked about the lack of aid, it was in comparison to, first, the level of need and, secondly, the resources that we were able to deploy in the war against Iraq over Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I listen to what the hon. Lady says, but I think that, on any reasonable judgment, our contribution has been immense.

It is our wish to ensure that the objectives of Security Council resolution 688 are effectively achieved. On 8 April, as we know, the Prime Minister put to his European collegues in the special European council in Luxembourg a proposal to establish the safe havens. The proposals received the enthusiastic backing of our European partners, and in the days that followed there were intensive discussions with our friends and allies about that.

On 16 April President Bush announced that the United States, the United Kingdom and France would send

troops to northern Iraq, but it was made clear at the time that the deployment was a temporary measure to meet an immediate and overwhelming humanitarian need and to allow the refugees to return to their homes in conditions of safety.

The aims of the deployment were fully consistent with what had gone before. On 18 April, the Secretary of State for Defence spelled out in a statement to the House what British forces would be committed.

The logistical and practical problems faced by the military and the humanitarian relief organisations deployed in northern Iraq have been formidable. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in paying tribute to the remarkable skill and dedication shown by all involved in so effectively meeting the needs of the refugees. The progress since the deployment took place has been truly remarkable.

As many as 2 million Kurds, Christians and Turcomans may have fled their homes in fear at the end of March. Military and non-governmental organisation personnel on the ground have not only provided the conditions of security which have allowed many of the refugees on the border with Turkey to return home, but have helped to feed them, establish sources of clean water, dramatically improve hygiene and provide medical services.

Here I wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the Governments of Turkey and Iran, in contrast to what was said earlier. They have responded to the need on a huge scale, and we have provided assistance to both Governments as best we can.

The humanitarian needs of the refugees from Iraq have now largely been met.

Mrs. Clwyd: No.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Let me develop my point; then I will accept an intervention.

The airlift of the remaining refugees from the last camp at Cukurca began earlier today, and by the end of the week they should have been relocated in longer-term accommodation in Turkey. It has been agreed—it is important that I refer to this—that the United Nations should take over responsibility for the refugee operation from coalition forces from 7 June. Those of our troops who have been engaged in providing humanitarian relief to the refugees have finished their job and will be brought home.

But there remain the other troops in Kurdish Iraq. The House will, I hope, agree that coalition forces cannot remain in northern Iraq indefinitely. Their deployment was intended as a temporary measure to meet an immediate and overwhelming humanitarian need. It is right that that responsibility should now be passed to the United Nations, but we would be failing in our duty if we were to ignore the situation of the Kurds, and we are doing everything that we can to ensure that the callous persecution that they have suffered at the hands of Saddam Hussein does not happen again.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister believe that Security Council resolution 688, as it relates to the repression of the Kurds, has been breached?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am sorry, but I shall deal later with the allegations that the hon. Gentleman made.

First among the measures to be taken will be the deployment of United Nations relief workers. The memorandum of understanding between the Iraqi Government and the United Nations provides for the establishment of United Nations humanitarian centres throughout Iraq. The presence of UN personnel, whose task will be to work among refugees, should provide considerable reassurance. We hope that a significant UN presence will soon be in place throughout northern Iraq.

Prince Sadruddin, the Secretary-General's executive delegate, whom my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met in London earlier this week, is well aware of the need to get UN staff on the ground quickly. The UN relief effort will be complimented by the presence of up to 500 United Nations field services officers, drawn from the ranks of the UN security force in new York and Geneva and other sources. We see their task as being to monitor the situation in Iraq—I beg the hon. Member for Workington to listen carefully—and they will be able to report any abuses to the Secretary-General, who will be free to take them up with the Iraqi authorities and, if necessary, the Security Council. Some 47 field service officers and 162 United Nations personnel are already in Iraq and more will be sent shortly.

The hon. Member for Workington made some greatly exaggerated allegations. The field service officers will report abuses to the Secretary-General, who will be in a position to take them up, if he feels it appropriate, with the Security Council. That is the appropriate way of dealing with the matter.

We do not expect the Iraqi Government to hinder the relief operation. We and our allies would view any attack by the Iraqis as completely unacceptable, and there have been only minor isolated incidents so far.

Ms. Primarolo: Is it correct to summarise the position by saying that the UN will monitor the atrocities, whereas the task of the allied forces is stop them occurring? If so, does the Minister accept that it would be better to stop them occurring rather than to monitor them?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have explained the position. The hon. Lady knows that our actions in the conflict with Iraq and in establishing the safe havens in northern Iraq have been consistent with, and derived support from, United Nations resolutions. We have operated on that basis.

I recognise the fear of the Kurds, which the hon. Member for Bristol, South mentioned. We recognise the justice of the Kurdish case, in which the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has much interest and experience going back many years. We have made clear our support for autonomy for the Kurdish people and our respect for human rights, and I am happy to repeat that. That is what the Kurds want; they are not calling for a separate Kurdish state.

We hope that a satisfactory agreement between the Kurdish leadership and the Iraqi Government will be reached. Sadly, Saddam Hussein gives the impression that he seeks to drag out negotiations in order to buy time. He should realise that the only way to resolve the problem, which has given rise to considerable international condemnation of his regime, is to respond generously to the legitimate aspirations of the Kurdish people.

In our contacts with Kurdish leaders, we stressed the importance of reaching an early agreement. However, the Kurds' suspicions of the Iraqi regime have been amply

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

justified by its past actions. We shall be working to ensure that any agreement is properly underpinned by the United Nations.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley suggested that, before 2 August 1990, Iraq was a country with which we were best friends. Does she not remember the condemnation that the British Conservative Government expressed four or five years ago after the appalling use of weapons at Halabja? That incident was raised in the UN Security Council by the British Government. Is that the act of a country with which one can say we were in friendship? That is an absurd proposition.

Mr. Corbyn: I recall the British Government's condemnation of the Iraqi Government in 1988 following their chemical attacks on Halabja. However, I recall also that, less than a month later, a substantial export credit loan was given to British companies to allow them to trade with Iraq, on top of all the other loans that had been made available. Does the Minister accept that the problem of the Kurdish people must be dealt with, and that requires pressure from other Governments in the region, including Turkey, if the awful horrors of the past few months are not to be visited upon the Kurdish people again in the future?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I cannot accept that. I certainly cannot accept that there was any degree of friendship between the British Government and the Iraqi Government before 2 August last year.

An agreement between the Kurds and the Iraqi Government would be a great step forward, but it cannot be a precondition for the withdrawal of coalition forces. We must look at other ways of providing the Kurds with the assurance that they need. We are discussing with our allies what arrangements might appropriately be made to deter Saddam Hussein from further aggression—perhaps by the stationing of military forces in the region but outside Iraq.

I want to make it clear that, if the Iraqi Government were to embark on a further round of repression, the Government would not hesitate to have recourse to the Security Council, to seek a further resolution authorising action to halt it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am not saying anything particularly new, but if it gives satisfaction to the hon. Member I am most pleased. I am more than happy to underline and endorse the Prime Minister's commitment to the recent Conservative party conference.

The British Government's response to the refugee crisis in Iraq has been swift, decisive, and effective. Now that the immediate humanitarian needs of the refugees have been met, we are moving into a new phase. It would not be right for coalition forces to remain in northern Iraq indefinitely, but the Government will work actively to create the climate of security and reassurance necessary to allow the Kurds to rebuild their lives and to ensure respect for their fundamental human and political rights.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Is the Minister giving way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have finished, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has sat down.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 7 June 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Nationalisation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Mr. Speaker: This morning's debate is on nationalisation, denationalisation and renationalisation——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On that?

Mr. King: No, not on that but, with your indulgence, I should like to raise a point of order about the *Official Report* which, as you know, is the guardian of the spoken word in the House. I refer you to column 403 of yesterday's edition, which contains an exchange of views between her Majesty's Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister.

When making his point about interest rates charges as they affect small businesses, the Leader of the Opposition stated:

"Small businesses which used to have arrangements to pay 3 per cent. above base rate on their overdraft facilities are now paying as much as 17 per cent.—[*Official Report,* 6 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 403.]

There was then an interruption, of which I was a part, which was an expression of incredulity about the fact that base rates for some businesses could be the base rate plus 17 per cent. which is what we understood the Leader of the Opposition saying. He was making a highly ambiguous statement. If you read on a little further, Mr. Speaker, you will see that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also believed that the Leader of the Opposition was saying that the lending rate for small businesses was the base rate plus 17 per cent., because he expressed astonishment and frank disbelief at those allegations.

The Leader of the Opposition has since gone public and has written a letter to the Prime Minister, which is well reported in today's press, expressing his concern about the Prime Minister's ignorance of actual interest rates. My point——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would this not make an interesting contribution to the debate? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I think that it probably would because, as far as I can see, it is not a matter for me. After all, I am frequently astonished at what I hear in the Chamber but, provided that it is in order, I have to let it go.

Mr. King: Yes, Mr. Speaker, but I wondered whether it would be possible to ask *Hansard* whether it has received any correction from the Leader of the Opposition by which he could establish what he was trying to say once and for all instead of leaving us with the waffly way in which he put it.

Mr. Speaker: I am not aware that *Hansard* has been asked to make that correction. I repeat that the hon. Gentleman's point would probably be in order if he were to make it in a fairly sophisticated way in the debate—that is, if he is fortunate enough to catch the eye of the Chair.

9.38 am

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): It is relatively rare for the House to have an opportunity to discuss an important theme such as this, which runs right across all sorts of departmental responsibilities. Understandably, there is a tendency for debates to be focused on relatively narrow areas of Government and public life. It is therefore useful to have an opportunity for a wide-ranging and relaxed debate on something of profound importance that applies right across British life.

As you have said, Mr. Speaker, the title of the debate on the Order Paper, "Nationalisation, denationalisation and renationalisation", has been chosen to allow us to range fairly freely, and to allow the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) to make a few things a little clearer than they have been.

There used to be a complaint that in Britain we suffered from pendulum politics. The issue of private and public ownership of industry was used as an index of that. Ownership tended to lurch from private to public, public to private and back to public again. One had sympathy with those who worked in the steel industry, who were subjected to the pendulum. For years, the pendulum swung towards nationalisation and state ownership. From 1945 until the late 1970s, more and more areas of the economy came under state ownership. Since then, of course, the pendulum has begun to swing back.

In such matters, we should always seek to establish as broad a consensus as possible between the parties. Today gives us an opportunity to explore what scope there is for such consensus, how much of what it claims to believe the Labour party truly believes, and what we can agree.

The history of nationalisation and state ownership is lengthy and sorry. I do not doubt the motives of those who pursued the dogma. I accept that they believed that state ownership would somehow transform the lives of businesses. Indeed, it did so, but not in quite the way that was envisaged. I found an excerpt from the Labour party manifesto of 1945. It is an important and interesting historical document. It contains statements of the following nature:

"Amalgamation under public ownership will bring great economies in operation and make it possible to modernise production methods and to raise safety standards in every colliery in the country. Public ownership of gas and electricity undertakings will lower charges, prevent competitive waste, open the way to co-ordinated research and development, and lead to the reforming of uneconomic areas of distribution."

That is just a flavour of the spirit—I accept that it was sincere—in which the exercise was embarked upon all those years ago. It was believed that the process of state ownership would create dynamic companies with a work force driven to Stakhanovite effort by the knowledge that they were working, not for themselves, wicked capitalists or coal owners, but for society.

The commanding heights of the economy—railway, coal, steel, gas, electricity and companies such as Cable and Wireless, all the way through to Pickfords and Thomas Cook all fell sway to state ownership. I do not blame Labour for that. It was warned at the time that the

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policy would be disastrous—which it was. However, Labour was in the grip of a dogma, and those who are in the grip of a dogma do not always respond rationally to warnings. Of course, many other countries apart from Britain were doing likewise. In eastern Europe, not only the commanding heights but the sunlit uplands, the deeps of the valleys and every part of the economy was subject to the liberating and dynamic hand of state ownership. One can see the results clearly.

For example, in 1938 the per capita gross domestic product of Czechoslovakia was the same as that of Switzerland. By the time that the Communist tyranny was removed in 1989, the GDP had sunk to a third of that of Switzerland. Such is the dynamising effect of state ownership. I do not wish to dwell on the record of nationalised industries in Britain. It is a sad and depressing saga in our nation's life. We all remember the British Steel Corporation, with its losses of £1 million every day of the year. We all remember British Telecom being in the Guinness Book of Records for the largest loss ever. We all remember the sloppy standards, the waiting lists for telephones, the ever-rising prices, the dingy tale of failure, the contempt for the customer, the craven management and the political interference. British Telecom was stifled by bureaucracies and governed by overweening trade unions. It had one theme running throughout—utter contempt for the customer.

In the early 1980s, when the Conservative Government started to blaze the trail that has now burned worldwide, what was Labour's response? Was it a pragmatic response of concern for the customer? Was it a questing, practical approach and an attempt to seek common ground? Sadly, no. The reaction throughout in every case without exception was blind opposition and crusted reaction. The Labour party desperately held on to the hands of the clock to stop the march of time.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Before my hon. Friend gets too deep into the incredibly—or perhaps naturally—negative attitude of the Opposition to all the privatisation measures, may I take him back to what he said about the Labour party wanting to conquer the commanding heights? He will recall a well-known organisation of the 1970s called the National Enterprise Board. It was not only interested in the commanding heights but invested in the most ridiculous small businesses. That is not to say that small businesses are ridiculous. They are the most important part of the economy. But the investments were ridiculous because they were unsuccessful.

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): It is called picking losers.

Mr. Grylls: My hon. Friend the Minister will remember, because of his excellent memory and the research that he has done, a firm called Thwaites and Reed, which was a tiny, unsuccessful clockmaker on the south coast—not that is a fault. The south coast is a good place to be and we should probably all prefer to be on the south coast now. But there was Thwaites and Reed—one of the commanding heights of the economy. The NEB put £140,000 into it, which went down the drain. The NEB then put another £180,000——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a most interesting speech which should be made a little later.

Mr. Grylls: I was drawing my hon. Friend's attention to that example, because it seemed to fit in with what he was saying about the commanding heights. Does my hon. Friend agree that the commanding heights are rather more than the commanding heights? Therefore, there is a danger that, if Labour ever returned to power, it would tackle the lower heights, as well as the commanding heights.

Mr. Maude: It is entirely true that the Labour party used to talk about the commanding heights. It usually managed to level down substantially what it referred to as the commanding heights, so that the heights were rather less high at the end than they were to begin with. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) does the House a service by reminding us of the tendency of the last Labour Government, as my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) put it, to pick losers with a sure and certain touch and to roam the byways of the British economy looking for something that they could make worse. Frequently they did so.

It is astonishing that, in spite of the self-evident failure of state ownership, when the Conservative Government came to reverse it and free businesses from the dead hand of state ownership and put them into the private sector where they could serve the consumers whom they were supposed to serve, the Labour party still clung to the dogma. It not only clung to the dogma and opposed what we sought to do but predicted the worst of disasters in every case. It predicted that there would be higher prices and less investment, that investment would cease, that poorer service and disbenefits for the consumers would be the result.

Let us examine what happened in practice, taking as an example British Telecom. Labour predicted that British Telecom would neglect public payphones and that they would disappear. What happened? In 1984, there were 77,000 British Telecom payphones. Today, there are more than 97,000, with Mercury payphones available on top of that.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): And they nearly all work.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend predicts my next point. Are payphones neglected? Not at all. Today, over 90 per cent. of payphones work, whereas before privatisation up to a third did not.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Some 95 per cent. of payphones work.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend, with his detailed knowledge of the company, is able to provide up-to-the-minute information. He, too, does the House a service. Some 95 per cent. of payphones now work, compared with the shabby, shameful record under state ownership, when up to a third of payphones did not work.

Does the Labour party admit that it was wrong? I am a fair-minded man, as my hon. Friends will accept. I should like to give the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East an opportunity to admit that the Labour party was wrong. Will it now apologise to all those who depend on

call boxes for deliberately misleading and frightening them, many of them elderly people? Will the Labour party, just once, admit that it was wrong and say that it is sorry?

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maude: I should have preferred to give way to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, but he has been smitten by unusual shyness.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend regard it as significant that only two Labour Members are present? Does he think that the rest have gone out into the highways and byways to find more losers into which to put public money? Does he agree with me that Labour Members regard their policy as such a loser that they do not want to speak about it?

Mr. Maude: I fear that it is worse than that. I fear that the Labour party has abandoned its policy of simply picking losers. If it got into government by some unhappy mischance, it would scour the economy and every highway and byway of it to find successful businesses it could ruin. Instead of just pouring taxpayers' money into failures, it would take successes, the successes which have transformed the British economy during the 1980s, and ruin those as well.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it not possible that many of the Labour Members who should be sitting opposite have slunk off into the well-known highways and byways to hide their heads in shame at the abject failure of their predictions? It is noticeable that 50 per cent. of Labour Members present is the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who obviously feels so committed to clause 4 of the Labour party constitution that he has taken time off from his duties as collector-in-chief for the bail-out fund of his friend the leader of Derbyshire county council, Councillor Bookbinder, to be present today. We are very honoured that he is.

Mr. Maude: I wish that I could share my hon. Friend's optimism that Labour Members are hiding their heads in shame. I do not believe they are. I believe that they are preparing things that are worse, and I shall hint later at what they have in mind for the future.

Once again, I am prepared to give the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, who is a straightforward chap most of the time, a chance to say honestly and in a straightforward, manly fashion, that the Labour party was wrong, that it misled and deceived the public. It should say that it is sorry, but I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman will not do that.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I hope that this will not come as a terrible shock to the Minister, even at this hour of a Friday morning, if I tell him that I will not say anything of that sort. I shall make my own speech, in my own time and in my own way.

Mr. Maude: The House will be united in disappointment at that poor intervention. The hon. Gentleman has shirked an opportunity to put matters right.

What were the Labour party's predictions about investment in British Telecom? It predicted that it would cease. However, in 1991, capital investment is running at £3 billion a year, double the 1984 level, since when total investment has reached £14·5 billion. In the 1970s, under the benign hand of the Labour Government and state ownership, British Telecom fell victim to Labour's capital spending cuts. When the bailiffs came in, the first thing to be cut was capital spending in the nationalised industries and in the health service and education. Since 1984, British Telecom has been able to invest heavily. How would it be able to invest without profit?

I have another question for the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East which he may care to reply to in his speech. Is it better for companies such as British Telecom to suffer under Government capital spending cuts, as it did in the mid-1970s, or is it better for a company to be self-sufficient and able to invest heavily in capital out of its own profits? I know what the customers think. They firmly believe that what happens now is better.

What about service to the customer? Throughout the debates on privatisation, the Labour party has harped on the theme that service to the customer will suffer. This year, British Telecom has offered a system of compensation to customers whose phones are not repaired within two working days. Did nationalised British Telecom ever do that? Is it conceivable that it would have been able to do that? Is the service now worse than the one that the customer previously received? Who now has to wait six months for a telephone number? Which is better, the performance of British Telecom when it was nationalised or the performance now?

Let us consider prices. I readily accept that call charges have risen. In one year, overall charges rose by 60 per cent. and local call charges doubled. Which year was that? It was 1975-76. Since 1984, call charges have fallen by 20 per cent. They will now be set at 6·25 per cent. below the June retail prices index increase, and it is not difficult to predict that that is likely to mean a fall in real terms. Clearly it is, and it is also likely to mean a fall in cash terms. Which is better for the customer: an increase of 60 per cent. and a doubling of local call charges, or a fall in real and cash terms? The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East may like to answer that, too.

Let us consider pricing in the two decades. The cost of a three-minute, cheap-rate local call went up by 16 per cent. between 1971 and 1981. Between 1981 and 1991 it fell by 36 per cent. Will the hon. Gentleman say which was better? British Telecom has delivered better standards, higher investment and lower prices in the private sector than it could ever have done in the public sector.

A similar story is told by the water industry in the brief period since it has been in the private sector. The quality of water has improved. In Severn Trent Water, my own area, 96 per cent. of the sewage works now comply with discharge consents, against only 76 per cent. before privatisation. Wessex Water is bringing forward the deadline to cease dumping at sea by five years, and it will comply with legislation to remove pesticide contamination from supplies three years early. Thames Water will open its London ring main ahead of schedule next year.

Capital investment in the water industry is rising sharply. In Thames Water, it rose by 59 per cent. last year, to nearly £400 million. North West Water spent more than £400 million on its core capital programme last year, and that is expected to rise to £500 million this year. Only five years ago, we were being told that the capital investment required by the water industry to replace the Victorian mains could not reasonably be met. What is happening now? The investment is being met by private sector

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companies raising capital in the private sector, and they are doing a far better job than they could ever have done in the public sector.

In the past five years, electricity prices have fallen by 5 per cent. in real terms. Under a Labour Government, one has to admit that they rose by only 2 per cent.—2 per cent. every six weeks. Again, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East may like to comment on which was better for the consumer. Is he interested in the consumer or is he interested only in those who work for the businesses?

Throughout the debates on privatisations, Labour claimed that catastrophe was looming. In 1983, during a debate on the Telecommunications Bill, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said:

"the Bill will undermine and frustrate the development of the telephone service as a universal amenity for all our people."
—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1983; Vol. 149, c. 37.]

What has been the reality? There are 3 million more private telephones for our people and lower charges have been introduced. The Labour party said that the customer would be ripped off, standards would fall and prices would rise. That was all wrong and irresponsible scaremongering. Will the Labour party apologise? So the record of privatised companies is higher quality, more investment and reasonable or falling prices.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East may claim that some of those companies' profits are too high and should be lower. The idea that shareholders who have invested their money in the companies should get a return on that capital is still anathema to him and his hon. Friends.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that those profits mean that the state receives more in tax receipts from those companies than it ever received under state ownership? Does he believe that investment is better from profit or that it is better borrowed, subject to political control and whim? Whose judgment does he believe is better of what amounts to an acceptable rate of return? For example, for British Gas, does he believe that the sober, hard-headed judgment of Mr. Mackinnon, the director-general of the Office of Gas Supply, is to be preferred to the judgment of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)? I know whose judgment the British public at large prefer.

Profits are subject to control. If they are excessive—if it is judged to be an unreasonable rate of return—there is tougher regulation for those industries than ever there was under state ownership. The Office of Telecommunications has far greater powers to interfere and intervene, in detail if necessary, with the operation of British Telecom on behalf of the customer than ever the Government could have done. So the complaint that there are excessive profits says far more about the attitude of the Labour party than about the companies. Too often, Labour Members show how they hate success. Those profits show—at the same time as charges and prices have been falling in real terms—that businesses are performing better for the customer.

Considering that record of success, it is small wonder that privatisation is spreading far and wide. The Labour Government in Australia are proposing to privatise the Commonwealth bank, airlines and satellite communications.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): My hon. Friend has not referred to the appalling record of labour disputes that we used to have when those industries were owned and run by the state, with overmanning and so on. At that time, we had an appalling level of disregard by unions of the public's interest, leading up to the terrible crisis of 1979, when people were not even being buried. That was an appalling aspect of national ownership and control and political interference in industry.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is right. A grubby set of negotiations between the Government and trade union barons managed the state-owned companies under Labour Governments. Where, so often, were the interests of the consumer? The consumer was left out of the calculation. It was entirely to do with deals done between Labour Ministers and trade union bosses. I hope that we never see that again. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East can help us over that. Does Labour propose to return us to that state of affairs?

I was referring to parts of the world where privatisation has now taken hold. In Sri Lanka, the textile industries, television, hotels and distilleries are being privatised. In Greece, there is a list of 150 potential sales in preparation, including petrochemicals, vehicles manufacturers and refineries. In Eire, the list includes Irish Sugar and B and I Line ferries.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Oh, dear.

Mr. Maude: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman think that they are all wrong and he is right?

Mr. Campbell: If the position of the sugar industry in Ireland is considered by the Minister to be a compelling part of his argument, he is stretching for examples to prove his point. Surely he has better examples to give the House.

Mr. Maude: I am giving examples in random order, and I shall be favouring the House later with some better ones. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will take part in the debate and say whether he thinks all those people are wrong and the Labour party is right.

In Hungary, telecommunications, construction industries, oil industries, chemical businesses and hotels are being privatised. Large companies in Czechoslovakia are lodging proposals now, and full-scale privatisation starts this summer. In Poland, 1,000 companies are being privatised this year. In Argentina, telecommunications, airlines, electricity businesses and shipping are all headed for the private sector.

In Brazil, the steel industry and a wide range of other industries are heading out of the public sector into the private sector. In East Germany, 1,200 companies have already been sold and other, more difficult, candidates are planned to be sold. In Japan, telecommunications, the railways and tobacco industries are all heading for the private sector. In Mexico, banks, the steel industry, telecommunications and television are being privatised. In New Zealand, the telecommunications business is being privatised.

In the Philippines, airlines, banks and oil are heading out of state ownership. Banking, steel and newspaper industries in Portugal are all heading out of state ownership. In Venezuela, airline businesses, banking and telecommunications are being released from the dogma of state ownership. In Cuba, they are selling housing.

In other words, in countries in every continent, under Governments of every complexion, privatisation is now the watchword. It is happening almost everywhere but, sadly, not quite everywhere. I think particularly of three redoubts of reaction, three bastions of the old dogmas. There is no commitment to privatisation in North Korea, Albania or—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends have probably guessed the third. It is the British Labour party. Walworth road lines up alongside North Korea and Albania. Labour Members have opposed every move to privatisation with every ounce of fight they could muster.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): My hon. Friend may not be aware that I have had the interesting privilege of visiting Albania several times. Before he links the newly elected democratic Government in Albania with the British Labour party, may I ask him to put on record the distinction that at least in Albania they recognise that nationalisation was wrong and are intent on changing the system?

Mr. Maude: A valuable part of this debate has been the way in which hon. Members have introduced up-to-the-minute information from all parts of the world, and my hon. Friend testifies that the list is now down to two. Only in North Korea and Walworth road do the dogmas lie untouched. Even in Albania, in Tirana, the world is moving forward. The thinking there is more advanced than it is in Walworth road.

Labour has opposed privatisation at every stage, and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East now has the whole morning before him to set out his stall. He has had all week in which to consult his hon. Friends so that he can array their pledges before the House in sparkling order for scrutiny. He may also wish to answer a few questions. For example, is clause 4 still an integral part of the Labour party's constitution? *[Interruption.]* We note that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has joined the hon. Gentleman on the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East may wish to seek some ideological reinforcement from his hon. Friend. Does the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange still bind the Labour party in the way that it always did? What is the current interpretation? Are there plans to repeal it? If not, what will the Labour party do? Perhaps the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will choose not to answer those questions, in which case we must look elsewhere to see what others have said about it. In 1986, a document intriguingly called "Social Ownership" said that clause 4 of the party's constitution

"is as relevant today as it ever has been".

Does the hon. Gentleman believe that it still exists? Does he propose that it will operate under a future Labour Government?

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that British Telecom

"is coming back into public ownership in its old form immediately".

I emphasise his statement that that is an immediate priority on the return of a Labour Government and there is no backsliding or temporisation about that. What could be clearer?

One of the last Labour documents, "Looking to the Future" published in May 1990, says:

"If the public stake in BT's equity remains at 49 per cent., we shall buy sufficient shares at a fair market price to take that stake to 51 per cent.".

That statement was made a year ago. In this year's document, the Labour forgot to mention that. Was it a mistakeof the printers? Did it simply get left out at the typesetting stage? At the press conference where it was launched, the Leader of the Opposition was asked about it and forced to admit:

"there's no change in the policy there".

Why was it not mentioned in the document? Was the Labour party ashamed of it? British Telecom is the largest company in Britain, and the Labour party should say whether it is committed to returning it to state ownership.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): They are working on it.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman says that the Labour party is working on it, and I believe that.

Mr. Banks: I was just passing through the Chamber. I said that the Government are working on it, and was referring to the Minister's statement that British Telecom was the largest company in Britain. If the Government's policies are in place for much longer, British Telecom, like many other companies, will find itself among the small businesses.

Mr. Maude: That is a remarkable proposition, because I fancy that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will, in a few minutes' time, complain bitterly to the House that British Telecom is too large and becoming larger, and is making too much profit. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West takes a different view: he claims that British Telecom is a failure that will crumble away into nothing. Perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House would like to adjourn for a few minutes to allow them to decide the Labour party's approach.

Is the Labour party committed to renationalising and stripping away the shares of the employees and millions of shareholders who have invested their money in British Telecom? If the House does not have a clear answer today, we shall be very disappointed indeed.

What did the Labour party say about British Gas when it was privatised? The then Opposition spokesman said:

"under a Labour Government will be returned to the public sector".—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 810.]

Is that still true? If not, was it wrong to claim that privatisation was bad and should be reversed? Will it be put right by the Labour party now?

What did the Labour party say about the privatisation of electricity? In 1988, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, in the debate on the Address:

"We are implacably opposed to proposals to sell off our nation's electricity"—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 445.]

Is that still so? Is the Labour party still opposed to it? Will it renationalise it?

Mr. Nicholas Brown: That is a different question.

Mr. Maude: Perhaps then, we shall have a different answer. I hope, above all, that we shall have an answer. The Labour party has been dodging those issues for months, and the country demands an answer. The hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) gave a partial answer when he said:

"We shall ensure that the industry is returned to public control if the Secretary of State is successful in privatising it".—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 66.]

[Mr. Maude]

That statement was made as recently as March 1988 by the then official Labour party spokesman on energy. Is that still Labour party policy?

How would the Labour party renationalise the water industry? That is the only part of its policy about which it has been open and honest. It has said that it will take water back into public control. How would it go about it? In its document, "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change" it said:

"There would be no question of paying other than a fair market price for any equity or other ownership rights we wish to acquire".

What is meant by "a fair market price"? The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East should listen to the words of the hon. Member for Dagenham, because the House will expect him to comment on them. He said:

"A Labour Government would take action to regulate the water industry, which would reduce the profitability of the privatised water companies and therefore would be likely to depress the share price. Investors should take that into account."

I agree that investors should take that into account, and I am sure that they will. Is that a description of paying a fair market price?

Mr. Tebbit: It is a fairly clear description of a Labour Government's policies. They would do what they have always done. First, they would wreck the business and then they would say that it is wrecked and worthless. The country would then have to wait for a Conservative Government to come back into office and reprivatise the industry to make it successful again.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend gets right to the point, as usual. That is exactly what the hon. Member for Dagenham was saying. The Labour party will regulate the industry, reduce its profitability, wreck it and lower the price. Thus, it will steal money from those millions of people who have invested their hard-earned cash in shares in the water businesses.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the position is much worse than that? It will affect not just the millions of individuals who have invested directly in water, British Telecom, electricity and gas, but everyone who has a pension or life insurance with-profits policy will be affected by the confiscation proposals of the Labour party.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend calls it confiscation; I call it theft. The Labour party will deliberately reduce the value of people's property, in order more easily to take the industry back into state ownership.

A little later, the hon. Member for Dagenham was asked whether that general approach would apply to shareholders in the other utilities, as well as water. He replied:

"I think that is very probable. I think we shall certainly be consistent in our general approach."

I think that the Labour party probably will be too. It will seek to wreck all those industries in the same way.

That leads us to ask where Labour's policy will end. It looks like a partial agenda. As so often happens, the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East has given us a glimpse of the hidden agenda—the real Labour agenda. In an interview in May last year, the hon. Gentleman said of the British Airports Authority:

"These are areas which we are going to turn into public utility companies. We are not going to leave them as private sector companies."

Is that still Labour party policy? Is that another company that will be taken back into public—state—ownership? The hon. Gentleman was pressed to explain whether that meant that the BAA would be renationalised. The article continued:

"Prescott avoids a direct answer."

It goes on to say that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said:

"I have already told you more than I should. I have said more than I should."

As so often, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East did his country a sterling service. He lifted the curtain and enabled us to see the Labour party's real agenda. What could be clearer than his statement that he had already said more than he should?

I hope that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will tell us two things in his speech. I hope that he will come clean about Labour's real agenda and lift the curtain even further on Labour's hidden agenda for confiscation and theft. I hope that he will say what the Labour party intends to do, so that the millions of consumers can prepare themselves against the eventuality of a return to shoddy services, union-dominated bureaucracies, and the millions of shareholders can prepare themselves for another chapter of Labour's highway robbery.

I also hope that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will apologise to the House and country for all the deceptions, deceits and scare stories on privatisation used by the Labour party. I hope that, just for once, he will accept that the Labour party was wrong and we were right, and apologise to the House.

10.21 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Confiscation, theft and highway robbery are heady charges to be summoned to the House to answer on a Friday morning, but those are the charges that the Financial Secretary puts to me in his slightly hysterical romp through what he thinks are the Labour party's policies.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will know better than anyone here that Fridays are reserved for debates on motions, private business, private Members' motions, private Members' Bills or Government legislation, but today we are discussing none of those. Instead, we are holding a Government-inspired debate on a motion for the Adjournment. The Government have been unable to find anything better to do with parliamentary time than hold a student union-style debate for its own sake, with no real conclusion except

"That this House do now adjourn".

The Financial Secretary then has the nerve to express surprise that my right hon. and hon. Friends have found something better to do than come here and take part in an Oxbridge-style debate.

If the Government have the sort of priorities that we think they have, why are we not discussing legislation to deal with what the Prime Minister believes to be the great issues of the day—pit bull terriers, Hackney council or the English cricket team? Those are the sort of priorities that the Prime Minister has and, surely, we should be discussing legislation on them now, instead of having to stay up until 4 am next Tuesday as I expect that we shall

have to do. The Government have found nothing better to do with parliamentary time than hold this debate today and I hope that the electorate will take note of that.

Mr. Oppenheim: I am astonished at the hon. Gentleman's attitude. He says that we are discussing a matter of no importance, yet we debate the future of some of the biggest companies in this country—employing tens of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, of people—and the interests of not only their millions of customers, but their millions of shareholders. He comes to the House and belittles all those interests.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman, I hope not deliberately, misunderstands me. I am saying that the proposition that the House do now adjourn is a matter of no importance. That motion was put in front of us today not by the Opposition or a private Member, but by the Government who are responsible for moving forward the legislative programme. Are they able to do that? No, they are not.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us Labour's policies?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman now intervenes from a sedentary position asking me to give Labour policies. I was about to do that when he intervened to complain about what I said earlier. He cannot have it both ways and I suggest that he sits still for a little while at least, and listens to our modest and reasonable policies.

We have made three specific pledges on renationalisation, which I will read from our policy review document, "Looking to the Future", so that the Financial Secretary can be absolutely clear about what we are saying and what we are not saying. The first of those propositions relates, as the Financial Secretary said, to the water industry. In the policy review document we clearly state that the provision of water is so fundamental that it should be made a priority for a return to the public sector. We go on to say:

"We shall of course pay a fair market price for any equity or ownership rights which we wish to acquire in the water industry."

On the subject of electricity we have made it absolutely clear that we shall take control of the national grid so that the Government may play the necessary strategic role in the industry—including the security of supply. We have confined our pledges to the national grid, not the rest of the industry.

Mr. Tebbit: The House will notice the difference between the words used by the hon. Gentleman when speaking about water, which he said would be returned to public-sector ownership—of course he means state ownership—at a fair market price, and those he used when speaking of the national grid, over which he said that a Labour Government would take control. Does that mean that the national grid would be repurchased or would it merely be expropriated without payment? What does he mean?

Mr. Brown: I can easily answer that question. It means that the national grid would be repurchased. We have no intention of expropriating anything—*[Interruption.]* The Financial Secretary intervenes to say that that seems fair-minded, for which I am grateful to him.

Mr. Maude: I merely asked whether the national grid would be repurchased at a fair market price and, if so, what sort. Would it be the Dagenham doctrine of a fair market price?

Mr. Brown: I thought that it was too good to be true. I obviously misheard the Financial Secretary. "Fair market price" means exactly that. If the Financial Secretary is asking me to set that price, obviously I cannot because it depends on prevailing market conditions, but we would look to those prevailing market conditions to set the price.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman may like to take this opportunity to help us. I am not asking him to set the price in pounds and pence, but how the price would be arrived at. Does he follow the Dagenham doctrine of over-regulating business and wrecking its profitability so that the price falls, which is what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) explicitly set out? Is that still Labour party policy?

Mr. Brown: I think that the Financial Secretary is misinterpreting what my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) means. I am absolutely certain that no Labour Member would seek to wreck a public utility—quite the reverse. We believe in publicly owned public utilities and would do nothing to damage them. When we say "market price" we mean precisely that.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*——

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I am much in demand and am enjoying being cross-examined as though I were the Minister, while Ministers are behaving as if they were Opposition Members. I shall give way to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and then to the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I wish to press the hon. Gentleman on the issue of the fair market price. In some forms of compulsory acquisition, the fact that acquisition is proposed must be ignored in the assessment of the value of compensation. If the Labour party were to come to power with a proposal for an acquisition of the sort suggested by the hon. Gentleman, that would inevitably affect the value of shares the day after the change of Government. Would a fair market price include the acquisition as a factor to be taken into account or disregard it? That may be an important consideration in the actual value of the shares at the time of the takeover.

Mr. Brown: The best way to answer that is to say that we would not want to pay too much, but we would not pay too little—*[Interruption.]* I see that Conservative Members feel that that is not as ample a reply as they would like. I understand their disappointment, but it is difficult to respond without knowing the precise circumstances. All I can do is to set out the principles involved. The circumstances will differ with different industries. In a moment I shall discuss British Telecom, the subject of our third pledge, but we already own 49 per cent. of the shares——

Mr. Grylls *rose*——

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I promised to give way first to the hon. Member for Esher.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is very kind. He is one of the reasonable men in his party so I am sure that we all understand that when he says fair he means fair. The problem is that some of his colleagues do not understand what fairness is in the context of the stock market. There have been questions about whether dividends for the water companies and others would be allowed. He must know that if a water company is valued on the stock market as a quasi-utility, the dividend yield is important to shareholders, and if it is questioned, that causes a fall in the share price. Millions of shareholders in the water industry will be listening carefully to the Labour party's policy on that. Although the industry may be safe in the hon. Gentleman's hands, it may not be safe in the hands of his colleagues.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about my being fair and reasonable. I like to think that that is why I was chosen to speak for the Opposition in this debate——

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Gentleman is the acceptable face of socialism.

Mr. Brown: I thank the hon. Lady for that compliment. The Labour party's approach to these matters does not mean that the whole of an industry has to be taken back into the public sector. We envisage private share ownership sitting alongside a public sector involvement —that is our policy for British Telecom. The policy review document states clearly that

"the public stake in British Telecom's equity remains at 49 per cent. We shall buy sufficient shares at a market price to take that stake to 51 per cent."

Hon. Members will notice that we do not say 100 per cent. That is our pledge and it follows logically that there would be private shareholders and public shareholders. It follows, too, that the position would not be very different from that of today.

It will not have escaped the attention of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) that a 49 per cent. stake in any company is a significant stake. It makes the holder a significant shareholder——

Mr. Norris: But it is not the same as 51 per cent.

Mr. Brown: Neither is it far short of 51 per cent.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is third in the queue.

Sir Michael Marshall: I am sure that Conservative Members appreciate the hon. Gentleman's giving way so much, although I am conscious that we may be helping him to fill out what would otherwise be an uncomfortable morning for him. I accept his reasons for a lack of precision about some of his figures, but he can be precise in one area at least. He mentioned the water industry. He will know of the commitment to capital expenditure of £28 billion on the industry over the next decade. Will he assure us that if a Labour Government are returned they will undertake to meet that commitment? Will he add that to the rest of Labour's expenditure list, which already suggests that heavy public expenditure will be the order of the day?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman must not be graceless when I give way to him. I do not have to give way to my Conservative inquisitors; I could plough on through my speech and really excite everyone but I want to assist them. He makes a good point: he is right that significant investment is required in the water industry, not just for historial reasons but because new environmental standards are rightly higher. I suspect that much, if not all, of the investment programme is unavoidable and will be continued whoever forms the next Government——

Mr. Grylls: If British Telecom were more inefficient and served the public worse now than when nationalised, that would be a good argument for taking it back into public ownership. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, that is not so and British Telecom has been transformed in respect of its service to the public—the customers. So why does the hon. Gentleman want to take it back into state ownership? If it were failing the nation I could understand why, but it is not.

Mr. Brown: I have only just got to British Telecom—Conservative Members keep intervening to ask me about water and electricity—It is our intention to make a moest adjustment to the state's already large shareholding in British Telecom——

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Brown: Hang, on; there is a queueing order today. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) is next, and after that I should like to make my speech.

We could justify our position on British Telecom solely on the grounds that it is a good investment, but we have a rather more sophisticated justification and I have it in the text of my speech. If the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) is not satisfied by it, I promise to give way to him again later. It is time for my next intervention.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene, but he was remarkably disingenuous to suggest that the only difference between our party and his on British Telecom is a mere 2 per cent. The hon. Gentleman is trying to con the British people into believing that 49 and 51 per cent. mean the same. Everyone knows that they are profoundly different.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that nationalisation by the back door, leaving 49 per cent. of the stock stranded and strangled by ownership by the state, is the most dishonest form of nationalisation of all?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman makes too much of this. Shareholders perceive the effect of having one large partner with 49 per cent. of the shares. The hon. Gentleman said that 51 per cent. is a more powerful holding. Of course it is an absolute holding, but 49 per cent. is not that different. I realise that the Government have announced their intention to divest themselves of further shares——

Mr. Maude: To help the hon. Gentleman get his figures worked out, may I point out that the Government's holding in British Telecom is now less than 48 per cent., at 47·9 per cent.? At today's share prices, increasing that stake to 51 per cent. would cost £730 million. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of that?

Mr. Brown: I was aware of that; I was not aware that the stake is slightly less than 49 per cent., but I am not sure whether that alters the argument much. I apologise to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for allowing the Financial Secretary to intervene out of turn, but he probably takes precedence.

Mr. John Marshall: It is amusing to see that the classless society has not yet pervaded the Labour party. Does the hon. Gentleman intend to take the whole water industry into public ownership? He will be aware that it has never been wholly publicly owned.

Mr. Brown: I understand that. My area was served by a private water company regulated by a tough but fair regulatory regime. I do not think that it would be necessary to take 100 per cent. of the water industry back into public ownership to achieve our objectives. That is not our proposal for British Telecom, and it would not necessarily be what we would do in the case of the water authorities.

I should like to come to more intractable problems and reply to a point made by the Financial Secretary in his slightly over-the-top speech. The Tory charge, which the Financial Secretary has made, is that we will not be able to afford these three relatively modest purchases and that if we could afford them we would not be able to afford anything else. There is some strength in that argument.

Mrs. Gorman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his definition of affording those purchases means that Labour would have to tax the public to enable them to buy back what they do not really want because they are better off with what they have? The hon. Gentleman is talking about hidden taxes.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Lady is here a week early. I shall be here next Friday to deliver my very popular speech on Labour's tax policies. I know that it is popular because that will be the third occasion on which the House has invited me to deliver it. If the hon. Lady wishes to cross-examine me on Labour's taxation policies I shall give her the opportunity to do so next Friday. I promise to give way to her the moment she rises in that debate.

Conservatives say that to sell the nation's assets at less than their true value is a bargain, but that to buy them back at the same price would be theft. That argument would certainly be advanced if a Labour Government ever tried to renationalise at anything less than market price. I am sure that that is what the Financial Secretary would say.

Mr. Maude: We are interested in what Labour means by market price. Is it the price that would apply in the market without the intervention of a Labour Government, or is it the price according to the Dagenham definition, which is that a Labour Government would take action to regulate the water industry? That would be likely to depress the share price.

Mr. Brown: I was coming to that issue. The regulation of an industry should not be set alongside the share price.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: It has consequences for the price.

Mr. Brown: Of course it has. Would anyone argue that the share price should be maintained against the interests of the consumer or the environment? Labour stands for regulation rather than for allowing the interests of shareholders free rein. There is nothing new and, I hope, nothing exceptional about that.

Our quite modest renationalisation pledges will have a cost attached and I suspect—as we approach the next election I think I know—that there will be other even more pressing demands on the public purse. As the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) will discover next week, our taxation and public expenditure policies are tightly drawn.

Mr. John Marshall: Oh.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman jeers. The Labour Treasury team has firmly set its face against allowing the tail to wag the dog and permitting public expenditure to get out of hand. It is unlikely that all our expenditure pledges will be implemented in the first year of a Labour Government.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman is most generous in giving way. As he is to speak in next Friday's debate, he is obviously the Opposition's Man Friday. Perhaps he should start a ticketing system so that interventions can be regulated. He has said that a future Labour Government will be firm about public expenditure. Over the past few months every Opposition Front-Bench spokesman has told the House that his Department will have spending priority. Spokesmen on health, employment, and overseas aid have said that their Departments will receive priority. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has said that only pensions and child benefit will be priorities. The hon. Gentleman has said that spending £700 million to buy back British Telecom will be a priority. Which of those policies will take priority? Will one of them be a top priority or an absolute priority, or will they all have priority?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Overlong interventions are made at the expense of hon. Members who are waiting to speak.

Mr. Brown: I did not say that the extra 2 per cent. stake in British Telecom would be the sort of priority that the hon. Gentleman seems to imply. I went out of my way to say something different. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would stop heckling and allow me to answer his intervention before trying to make his next point.

The precise ranking order of Labour's spending priorities will be determined in government and will have to fit the framework of the overall management of the economy and, in particular, the taxation and public spending policies. We fought that battle inside the Labour party throughout the 1980s, and I and my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) have won it. The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) finds that hard to stomach. It is right for Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen to set out the goals that they hope to achieve in government. However, they must all be set in the context of the famous phrase "as resources allow".

Mrs. Gorman: Would a 2 per cent. stake or the threat of such a stake in these industries have the same effect as a 2 per cent. stake by Hanson in ICI, about which the Labour party have been creating merry hell for the past couple of weeks?

Mr. Brown: The differences is that Labour does not intend to dismember the industries, sell their assets and

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make substantial numbers of the work force redundant for short-term gain and a risk to continued supply by that public utility.

Mr. John Marshall: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his great tolerance in giving way on so many occasions. His speech is almost a reply to a series of interventions. He said that spending priorities would be worked out in government. Is he telling the House and the country that at the next general election Labour will not be able to give the British people a list of spending priorities? We are being asked to buy a pig in a poke, and it is a very expensive poke.

Mr. Brown: I like the bit about a very expensive poke. It will be part of my job to cut it a bit. The hon. Gentleman misrepresents what I said. Of course we shall put our objectives to the electorate. We have repeatedly said that the exact year-by-year order in which the priorities are redeemed will be a matter for the Government and Cabinet to fight over in the public spending round, which is what happens at the moment. That is all that I am saying. Our pledges are clearly set out in the public domain. To excite the interest of the right hon. Member for Chingford, I tell the House that they have been ruthlessly costed. The right hon. Gentleman is not so excited as I hoped.

We realise that achieving the protection of the consumer and the environment through public ownership may not be immediately obtainable on coming into government. Nevertheless, the environment and the interests of the state, as well as those of the consumer, must be protected. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham has rightly said, we intend to put in place regulatory systems that will oversee the public utilities. We shall ensure that regulatory systems are strengthened so that utilities work in the interests of consumers and of the nation.

We propose to establish a new body—the consumer protection commission—that will cover all major utilities. It will bring together and strengthen the present major regulatory bodies. The commission will be accountable to a Select Committee and it will examine the performance of individual public utilities in public. In other words, there will be parliamentary scrutiny through a new Select Committee structure. If the proposal is implemented, it will reduce the present number of quangos. I think that that will appeal to Conservative Members and that they will welcome such a policy. I see from the faces of the Conservative Members who are in the Chamber that they do not welcome it.

It is not convincing when Conservative Members argue that our plans for the public ownership of public utilities would not be popular. Far from that being true, I think that we have public opinion on our side. I draw a distinction, however, between public utilities and other trading companies. I accept that the position of British Telecom is, to some extent, anomalous in the terms of the debate. That is because it has some of the features of a public utility and many features of a private trading company. I see that there is an intellectual difficulty.

Mr. Maude *rose*——

Mr. Brown: On that note I give way to the Financial Secretary, if he wishes to intervene.

Mr. Maude: It may be that the hon. Gentleman is about to deal with the matter that I wish to put to him. If so, I shall await his comments upon it with eagerness. He seems to be saying that for ordinary trading companies there is no case for a return to state ownership. If that is so, why did the Opposition oppose every privatisation, root and branch?

Mr. Brown: The Minister was right when he said that I might be about to move on to that very issue. My contribution to the debate has been not so much a speech so far, but more of a series of responses during Question Time. I have enjoyed the experience enormously.

Mrs. Gorman: Is the hon. Gentleman practising for the job?

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Answer the Minister's question.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. The interjection of the Minister's PPS, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), goes to show that he has entirely missed the point of these occasions.

I shall move on to some of our criticisms of the Government's privatisation programme.

Mr. Grylls: Finance is at the centre of the hon. Gentleman's argument, and he has tried to reassure the House about the Labour party's spending plans. If, for example, a Labour Government were to take the water industry back into nationalisation, it would be necessary to add to the cost of acquisition the investment programme of the industry, which is about £28 billion. As soon as 51 per cent. ownership is exceeded—my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will instantly intervene to tell me that I am wrong, if that is the position—it is my understanding that the industry becomes part of the public sector and, therefore, has to be consolidated in the public sector. All the capital expenditure of the water industry and of British Telecom would become part of the Government's public expenditure. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that all the capital expenditure of British Telecom and of the water industry, and of any other organisation that is nationalised, has already been costed, or is he saying that, because a Labour Government would not be able to afford such a programme, the capital expenditure of the water and telephone industries, for example, will have to be reduced? The hon. Gentleman should be open about these matters.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) should seek to make his speech in the course of the debate and not by means of intervening in the speech of another hon. Member.

Mr. Brown: I get the impression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would like me to make some progress with my speech and not to give way so often to those who wish to intervene. I have done my best to respond to the perfectly proper questions that Conservative Members have put to me, and to do so courteously.

The intervention of the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West touched on the important matter of adding to the public sector borrowing requirement through

renationalisation. It is a difficult matter for the Opposition. It is my view that we should devise structures in such a way as to enable public utilities to operate as separate centres so that they are not automatically drawn back into the Government's PSBR. That is why I have an affection for partnership arrangements with the private sector. I appreciate, of course, that such arrangements will endure only if private sector shareholders are able to secure a reasonable return on their investments. It follows in logic that the new-style nationalisation, if that is how Conservative Members wish to regard it, is not the same as the old approach. I hope that that goes some way to meeting the inquiry of the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West and demonstrates the thinking that lies behind what is called the new-model Labour party.

Mr. Ian Taylor: These are interesting matters and we would like to pursue them, with the hon. Gentleman's help. I am not entirely certain what he meant when he talked about keeping public utilities out of government. Under normal Government practice, a nationalised industry would be subject to external financing limits. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that there would not be EFLs for the companies that he is talking about? That would be critical to the policy that he seeks to pursue. One of the advantages of going into the private sector is gaining access to private capital, which means that the investment programmes for water companies, for example, can go ahead for the benefit of customers for the next decade. If the companies were in the public sector, EFLs would prevent the programmes taking place.

Mr. Brown: As I said to the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West, that is an important matter and one that is worthy of a full day's debate. Perhaps I am setting myself up for a third Friday. I very much enjoy the constructive contributions of the hon. Member for Esher to our debates as we consider the Finance Bill in Committee. He is fully entitled to at least a reply in outline, and with his permission I shall provide it by saying that we are trying to find our way to a structure that does not involve all the investment programmes of the public utilities being drawn into the public sector borrowing requirement. That is the strategic objective, and it is not one that will be impossible to realise. It is wrong to suggest that it is completely out of court. The objective involves a relationship with the private sector, and especially with the private money markets, which in the past have not served nationalised industries well. That is why we propose to proceed in the way that I have outlined.

I shall return to the main text of my speech. I wish to draw the attention of Conservative Members to some of the costs that the taxpayer has had to bear in the course of the Government's privatisation exercise. The costs to the taxpayer of privatising the water industry, for example, ran to about £2,173 million, for a total gain of about £882 million. The total cost to the taxpayer of that exercise, due largely to the write-off of debt and the injection of cash, is £1·291 billion. That is a substantial sum. In total, the taxpayer is subsidising the privatisation by £3·3 billion, and that is based only on the known costs. Conservative Members will say that the new structures justify the expenditure, but it is very heavy indeed. The Financial Secretary was quick enough to criticise our proposals for British Telecom, which would incur only a fraction of that, when Labour achieves office.

The sale of National Power and PowerGen has also been expensive for the taxpayer. The Government underpriced the shares by 37p. It follows logically that they lost the taxpayer £390 million. By the close of trading on Tuesday 12 March, 100p part-paid shares were trading at 137p—up by over a third in just one day. Under the Conservative party's own criterion, which is that the true value of an industry is what it will fetch on the market, the taxpayer has now lost £2·5 billion from the sale of the electricity industry. I think that that is an extraordinary price for the taxpayer to be asked to pay. Arguments about efficiency and managerial structures of public utilities should be dealt with on their own terms rather than by forgoing these assets—which are the state's assets—and losing taxpayers' money to transfer the utilities at great expense from the public to the private sector.

People's distress at the loss to the taxpayer of the true value of those assets is exacerbated enormously when they consider the profits made immediately the utilities are in private hands. They suspect that those profits have less to do with an efficiency exercise than with job losses and, above all, utility charges.

Mr. Maude: Do they not want environmental improvements?

Mr. Brown: We are not yet discussing the investment programme. The Northumbrian water company made a year on year rise in its pre-tax profits of 369·6 per cent. That is a substantial rise in anybody's terms, and it cannot be attributed solely to different managerial expertise in the private sector. I note that no Conservative Member has the cheek to say that it can.

Mr. Tebbit: I shall do so in a moment.

Mr. Brown: I look forward to hearing the right hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): As soon as possible.

Mr. Brown: The Government Whip, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), is reclining in a leisurely way in what I take to be his Friday suit. Perhaps he arrived late. I should perhaps explain that my speech is protracted because I have been fantastically generous in giving way to his hon. Friends when they have inquired, rightly and properly, into the policy of Her Majesty's Opposition, soon to be Her Majesty's Government.

The use that the privatised water companies have been making of their profits is quite interesting. South West Water has decided to spend its money not on environmental improvements, but on a bid for the south-west regional television franchise. If successful, it will have a 20 per cent. stake in the new company, West Country Television Ltd. What on earth has that to do with running a public utility and ensuring that the water supply is fit to drink? I suppose that South West Water could advertise that it is so by means of its newly owned television franchise, but that is not the same as putting the money into ensuring the actuality.

Severn Trent Water which, as the Financial Secretary said, covers his area—has just spent £212 million on a waste disposal company. Waste disposal now accounts for 15 per cent. of Severn Trent's activities. It may be legitimate for a water company to diversify into waste disposal. I have less quarrel with that than with Thames Water, which has a stake in the insurance industry. Welsh

[Mr. Brown]

Water has a stake in street cleaning; the Welsh and Yorkshire regional water companies, Northumbrian Water and Southern Water are involved in information technology; and apparently all the regional water companies are involved in property and leisure development—Welsh Water already owns two hotels. I remember what Conservative Members said when they discovered that British Rail owned hotels. They thought it was terrible and that they should be sold off straight away, but now that the other utilities are privatised, such activities are apparently to be encouraged.

It is suggested that the investment programmes of the great public utilities will take off now that the companies are in private hands, but British Telecom is not setting a good example to the rest. Notoriously, its profits for the year were more than £3 billion.

Mr. Maude: Investments are also at £3 billion.

Mr. Brown: The Financial Secretary rightly suggests by his murmurings as he cowers behind the Dispatch Box —either that, or he is falling asleep, I am not sure which —that there has been a public outcry about British Telecom's £3 billion profits. Consumers suspect that that reflected in their billing arrangements, and they are not wrong.

Mr. Riddick: What about investment?

Mr. Brown: The Financial Secretary's Parliamentary Private Secretary asks a good question. The investment programme has fallen by 11 per cent., or £370 million, compared with last year's programme.

Sir Michael Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman come clean and tell us what he regards as a reasonable return on investment? British Telecom's profits are normal compared with those of any other international company. Is he suggesting that it should have a lower return on investment than other similar international competing industries?

Mr. Brown: That is a difficult argument. After all, it is the Labour party that is proposing to buy shares in the organisation. Presumably, the hon. Gentleman would justify that by the return on investment, which he says is satisfactory and correct for an organisation of that size. It is the Financial Secretary who is saying that the returns on the investment are so good that the Conservative party will sell more of the Government's stake in that utility—presumably they will sell them at below their true market value. Is that the Financial Secretary's intention, or will the shares be pitched in at the actual market value? Perhaps he will answer that question—I have been very generous in answering questions.

Mr. Maude: The details of the further partial sale of British Telecom shares later this year will be divulged to the House in due course.

Mr. Brown: Now I know.

Mr. Norris: I know that the hon. Gentleman was very strict with himself about answering our questions, but he has not answered the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall). In the context of the size of the company and the size of any parallel undertaking anywhere in the world, the profits of British Telecom are comparable and reasonable. More important, does the hon. Gentleman agree that when the profit figure is almost exactly identical to the figure for capital investment in the company the same year, it is an even more reasonable return on investment?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman would do better to put those assertions to British Telecom's customers than to me. I am a BT customer and I have noticed that my bill has risen substantially over the past year, although I am not sure whether that is reflected in the level of consumption.

Mr. Riddick: It has risen because the hon. Gentleman talks too much.

Mr. Brown: My real problem is trying to get a word in edgeways.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury said that the British Government had led the way in privatisation. He compared Great Britain after 13 years of Conservative Government with countries that he regarded as analogous, and those included Sri Lanka, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Venezuela and Cuba. He also referred to several grim eastern European dictatorships. While some people in the Labour party might compare those countries to Britain under the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), I would not do that. However, it was interesting that such an analogy occurred to the Financial Secretary. The only nations that he suggested might be a correct analogy to the position of the parliamentary Labour party were North Korea and Albania. Such a proposition must have Mr. Peter Mandelson absolutely weeping into his duvet.

Mr. Maude: I will develop my analogy further. What Britain had in common with the eastern European countries at the beginning of the 1980s was an excessively large state sector which had to be reduced by businesses being returned to the private sector. Eastern and central European countries are going through exactly the same process now. The only redoubt of reaction is from the British Labour party and, of course, the North Korean communist party.

Mr. Brown: The debate has ranged widely, but it is probably not terribly productive to extend it to reforms in eastern Europe, although I wholeheartedly welcome what has been happening over the past three years in eastern Europe. It must be common ground in the House that the freedoms that we hope that people will enjoy in eastern Europe are freedoms that it is perhaps too easy to take for granted in western Europe.

Mr. Oppenheim: What about Ceausescu?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Member for Amber Valley seems to be trying to lay Ceausescu at the Labour party's door. There must be embarrassing pictures of just about everyone in public life, not just people from our side, with that gentleman.

Mrs. Gorman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I promise not to interrupt him again because, like everyone else, I am anxious to hear other hon. Members.

Does the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) remember the remarkable event last year when the leaders of so many Socialist countries came to

this country and stated publicly at the Conservative party conference how much they admired the privatisation policies and what they had done to transform Britain? That was a magical moment. Does the hon. Gentleman recall the old days when the Labour party used to trot out its socialist friends from eastern Europe in an effort to boost the party? I notice that Labour Members nowadays are not really fond of associating themselves closely with those people.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I draw attention to the fact that the House has been sitting since 9.30 am and it is now 11.13 am but, so far, Back Benchers have only been able to intervene.

Mr. Brown: I accept that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If hon. Members will allow me, I should like to complete my speech with less of the knockabout stuff. However, I must tell the hon. Member for Billericay that, regrettably, I have no friends in eastern Europe, communist or otherwise, disreputable or reconstructed.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury may cite examples from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Venezuela, Cuba and other states that he believes are directly comparable to Conservative Britain, but he cannot cite a trading partner of ours in the European Community which is putting its telecommunications network into the private sector. In every case the telecommunications network is owned and controlled by the state. Our EC trading partners are not lining up to follow Britain's example. I believe that the only two EC states whose telecommunications networks are in the private sector are Greece and Spain.

Another issue that has aroused a considerable amount of public interest and comment in respect of the Government's privatisation programme is the way in which the salaries of top executives are adjusted immediately after privatisation—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members groan and look uncomfortable at that, and well they might.

After Cable and Wireless moved into the private sector, the chief executive managed a 114 per cent. pay increase. The pay of the chief executive of Jaguar rose by 100 per cent. after privatisation. Similarly, the chief executive of Enterprise Oil received a pay rise of 167 per cent. after privatisation. The lucky man at British Airways received a 126 per cent. increase and the individual at the British Airports Authority received a modest 110 per cent. increase. In all, the trading company privatisations managed an average increase for the top executives in the first year of 78 per cent. That was not bad going. Of course, the wages of others in the industries did not follow suit.

The position was not quite so marked with the utilities. According to Incomes Data Services, the average pay increase was 62·1 per cent. although there were some stark examples. In 1990, the chairman of Thames Water, Mr. Roy Watts, was awarded a pay rise of more than 168 per cent. when increases for the other top executives of water companies averaged 100 per cent. The chairman of Anglian Water, Bernard Henderson, received a 100 per cent. increase in 1990. I understand that the pay increase for the chairman of British Telecom is to be announced today. The figure has not been brought to me in the Chamber, but at some stage in the debate I hope that it will be possible to draw the attention of the House to it. It is anticipated to be about 14 per cent. this year, but that is on top of the 32 per cent. that he gave himself last year. The suggested pay award for the employees is 8·3 per cent.

The Opposition have rightly made much of the position of the consumer. We believe that the privatised companies, whether they be trading companies or public utilities, are more concerned with the interests of the shareholders than with the interests of consumers or the country in which they operate. That is particularly important in the context of public utilities. However, it is clearly not right for the debate to be conducted along the lines of politicians' assertions with no evidence. In fact, we have some evidence to help us.

The London Business School conducted a survey with the United Research Group. That survey of privatised public utilities showed that customer service and product quality came bottom of the list of priorities that were put to senior managers. Only 27 per cent. of those surveyed mentioned product quality as a priority and only 18 per cent. mentioned customer service as a priority. Although that was merely a survey, it is indicative of attitudes among the newly privatised managements of those great ulitities. British Telecom has found that complaints from the public have been running at more that 30,000 this year. The Office of Telecommunications has stated that the total of complaints for 1990 showed a 21 per cent. increase over representations made in 1989, which itself was more than 34 per cent. higher than the figure in 1988. Gas complaints have been running at just over 21,000 and electricity complaints at more than 10,000. That suggests that the consumer is not satisfied, and one can understand that. The Conservative party is satisfied—indeed, it wants to go further. The Conservative party envisages private coal mines, private railway networks, privatised schools and privatised health care. All of that has its enthusiasts.

I have a pamphlet—I am always trying to improve my knowledge of such matters, and I know that the Conservative party is in favour of self-improvement—entitled, "The NHS—a suitable case for treatment", written by the No Turning Your Back group of Conservative Members. It must be Government policy because many of those people are now Ministers or at least serving in the Whips Office. The pamphlet talks about plans for the private sector, and it states:

"Particularly important for extending competition and co-operation"—

that is, inside the national health service—

"is that the spur should come not just from within the NHS, but with the private sector as well . . . As well as tendering for ancillary services, which have so far saved the NHS over £100 million"—

I understand that the figure has risen since then—

"partnership with the private sector has grown far beyond this."

The point that they do not make is that the money that they allege has been saved to the national health service has been saved at the expense of the wages and conditions of employment of the employees—not employees who are well remunerated, but employees who are not very well remunerated at all.

I agree with the next point in the pamphlet, which states:

"Hospital waiting rooms are being made more like airport lounges".

That is true. Just as in an airport lounge, one departs from a hospital lounge without getting medical treatment. The pamphlet goes on:

"Hospitals have used private facilities to clear their waiting-list backlogs or when their own operating theatres were infected.

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Whole treatments, such as dialysis, can be contracted out. Some NHS hospitals bring in a regular income by contracting out paybed facilities to private firms . . . Even more adventurously, hospital builders such as Tarmac Construction suggest that they could build and operate entire hospitals more efficiently and more cheaply than the public sector."

That would speed up operations, would it not? We would see blokes from Tarmac coming in with chainsaws and hammers to sort out the business. *[Laughter.]* I see that Conservative Members are happy with that; it cheers me up. The document concludes:

"Innovative partnerships with the private sector will bring more and more benefits as experience is gained."

It is a bit tough if one happens to be the patient on whom that experience is being gained. However, the pamphlet goes on:

"From the government side there must be a financial incentive structure which encourages such experimentation and development.

There should also be structural reform of NHS decision-making in order to take advantage of the best of both private and public sectors . . .

The introduction of internal markets within the NHS, as a first step, would get managers used to buying and selling services between themselves, and to both knowing and controlling the costs of everything they do."

That idea has taken off in Newcastle. As I pointed out in the public spending debate, the management of the health authority is doing precisely that. It has found that it can make more money selling radiotherapy beds. It first closed 15 of them, but it sold the remaining radiotherapy beds to neighbouring health authorities and generated an income for itself—by not treating people who live in Newcastle, of course. People in Newcastle are not allowed to go into hospitals for radiotherapy treatment as in-patients; they have to be treated as day patients regardless of condition. That strikes me as so outrageous as to be indefensible, even by Conservative Members.

The Freeman hospital in Newcastle is the flagship of the Conservatives' opting-out proposals. Not only was it the first hospital to opt out, but it is the one in which the famous IBM experiment on computerised costings is taking place. The allegation from the Conservative side is that that crypto-privatisation—that change of systems which would enable private and public money to go into the health service—will somehow help patients. One of my constituents, Mrs. Price, who lives in Monkchester road, has a pain in her knee. It is swollen and it is hurting her. Her general practitioner has asked the hospital consultant to look at her. She received a letter from the appointments officer, stating:

"I acknowledge receipt of a letter from your family doctor requesting an out patient appointment."

That is a reasonable enough beginning, but the letter goes on to say:

"We apologize for the fact that there is a waiting list of up to 30 weeks for a routine out patient appointment?"

That is what the opted-out system has done for that hospital.

Mr. David Lightbown (Staffordshire, South-East): What about the rest of the letter?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman asks, "What about the rest of the letter?" I shall read the whole letter for him, which will teach him to intervene from a sedentary position. The letter goes on to state:

"Every referral letter is read and prioritised by the Consultant concerned, and a letter will be sent to you approximately four weeks prior to your visit to out patients, with details of the date and time of your appointment.

If you are concerned in any way regarding your medical condition, please discuss this with your family doctor who may be able to help or advise."

The family doctor has already helped and advised. His suggestion is that she should go to a hospital and be looked at by a specialist consultant. The specialist consultant is saying that she will have to wait in pain for the next 30 weeks. That is just not acceptable.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: That did not happen under Labour.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, rightly points out that that did not happen under Labour. I suppose that he will go on to say that it was a long time ago.

Our objections to the Government's privatisation programmes are, of course, the costs of privatisation, which have been borne by the taxpayer, and the excessive profiteering which protects the interests of the shareholder against those of the consumer and, sometimes, against those of the environment. The issue of boardroom pay has stuck in the throats of just about everyone who has been following the matter, and the number of complaints received by the privatised utilities has increased substantially.

The Government have much to be ashamed of in their privatisation programme and nothing to boast about or to be proud about. It is absolutely clear why the Government are holding the debate on no matter of substance to vote on. With their record on privatisation, they are doing absolutely the only thing that they possibly could—they are practising holding an Opposition Supply day for the time when we become the Government and they have to hold Supply day debates.

11.26 am

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): I hope that I shall be briefer than some other speakers. I shall not attempt to follow either my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury or the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) through all the byways down which the hon. Gentleman in particular has taken us. In particular, I will not speculate on what goes on under Mr. Peter Mandelson's duvet: I give an absolute commitment on that.

Let me at once declare my interests in the debate. First, I am a taxpayer. Secondly, I am a consumer of the services of both the former nationalised and still nationalised businesses. Thirdly, I am a shareholder in Thames Water and British Telecom. Fourthly, I am a non-executive director of the latter company. Fifthly, just for the record, I hold the curious office of honorary adviser to the chairman of British Aerospace. I was also, for six of the eight years during which I served as a Minister in the Government of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) a sponsoring Minister of nationalised industries. For 17 years, I worked for a nationalised industry. On the whole, therefore, I claim some right to know a thing or two about nationalised and denationalised industries.

I should like to emphasise at once one or two things that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said. He is right. He referred to Christian Democrat Germany, not least what was once called East Germany, or cynically

known as the People's Democratic Socialist Republic of Germany. That was the one which was never democratic, although it was certainly socialist. The process of denationalisation is now under way there in Germany, in Mitterrand's socialist France, in Hawke's Labour Australia, in the more advanced countries of black Africa, under the Nationalist South African Government of President de Klerk, in South America and throughout eastern Europe. It is also happening in New Zealand where, in an advanced step, the national telephone company has been denationalised. Many other countries are now looking at the success of the denationalisation of our telephone company, and will be following suit.

Only the most backward reactionary socialists and hard-line Communists, referred to by the BBC's disinformation unit as "conservatives", believe any longer in state ownership and centralised economic planning—only them and, as we have heard again today, the modern British Labour party. Opposition Members call it "social ownership". It is more like an economic social disease—a business and commercial pox. These days, there must be more advocates of state ownership in the British Labour party than in the Albanian Government. As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said, the Labour party would now be hard-pressed to find soulmates anywhere —even in Cuba. Apparently not even Cuba believes in state ownership any longer. The British Labour party would have to go to North Korea to find anyone who would join it in its belief that centralised state planning and nationalisation are the way forward.

I shall restrict my remarks to only two or three of the many areas that could be debated this morning. First, I shall make some general observations on the issues and some observations derived from my experience as the sponsoring Minister for some state industries. Secondly, I shall make specific remarks about some of the nationalised industries, especially British Telecom, and about one organisation that has not yet been mentioned, the former freight division of the British Waterways Board.

Calls for Government spending are always in excess of what any Chancellor feels could be prudently or even imprudently financed. There are few businesses in which there are not more ways of spending money than there are of financing that expenditure. We are all familiar with the annual round of discussions between the Treasury and other Departments, which leads, sometimes through the so-called Star Chamber, to the public expenditure White Paper, which is the means by which the seemingly irreconcilable are eventually reconciled.

Incidentally, I should like to answer the point made by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East about the subject of debates for the Adjournment. I remember a Labour Government who debated the public expenditure White Paper on a motion for the Adjournment because they could not get a majority, since the Labour party was split over the cuts in hospital, school and social spending, that were imposed on the Labour Government by the International Monetary Fund—as a result not least of the follies of nationalisation that were committed by the last Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman should therefore be careful when he criticises the use of motions for the Adjournment.

As Ministers strive for the approval of their spending plans, the outcome is decided on all sorts of less than logical factors, not least of which is the political weight and influence or even the sheer tenacity of the Secretary of State concerned. It is hard enough deciding between whether there should be more expenditure on defence, or on education, the police, the health service, welfare or the other services, all of which fall fairly and squarely within the responsibility of the Government. As the finance director of any conglomerate will testify, it is hard enough to arbitrate on the financial needs of businesses that have little in common except ownership. However, if all that lot is put together in the public expenditure round, it is impossible to find any criteria on which one can arbitrate fairly between the demands of those inescapable Government responsibilities to which I have referred and the needs of commercial businesses.

In addition, if the business is nationalised, the Government are not only the financier and appointer of its management, but the regulator. The sheer impossibility of being fair when the Government are both the regulator and the financier, giving rise to the clearest possible conflicts of interest, stands out for all to see. The role of regulator may require the Government to impose extra costs on industries. However, in the role of financier, the Treasury may say that those costs cannot be afforded without closing another hospital, which is what the previous Labour Government did.

Inevitably, one also runs into the role of Ministers as politicians. We have heard this from a would-be Minister this morning, when the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East was busy trying to buy votes by pretending that Government control, even though it would result in cutting the capital expenditure programmes, would bring lower prices and improved quality to the consumer.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. He may be willing to argue this, but he will not be able to find any historical argument to buttress his case. What I have described has been the problem of nationalised industries over the years. Things would be even more difficult for a Labour Government because, as we all know, Labour politicians are always in thrall to the bosses of the big unions which, historically, have had large memberships in the nationalised industries.

Let me tell the House from my experience—perhaps not all my hon. Friends in the Government will be pleased to hear this—how the needs of nationalised industries are decided under any Government. In order not to personalise the matter let us take as an example what I shall call the nationalised British Widgets Corporation. The senior managers of that business would meet the senior officials at, say, the Department of Trade and Industry. The managers would already have produced a draft corporate plan. The senior officials at the DTI would then second-guess the senior managers. After much to-ing and fro-ing, a modified corporate plan would be agreed by the Widget board, which would bring it before the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State would then third-guess it and send his senior officials to their Treasury opposite numbers, who would then fourth-guess them. A compromise would be reached, which the Secretary of State would then fifth-guess, before going to see the Chief Secretary, who would sixth-guess him.

By this time, the financial year of the British Widgets Corporation would be half over, but the corporation would still not have an approved corporate plan. Indeed, it would know that, even when the corporate plan was

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approved, it would be a mess because the corporation had committed itself—or been unable to commit itself—to the necessary programme of investment. The bargaining would continue, with the Chief Secretary trying to arbitrate between the needs of the British Widgets Corporation and those of the national health service. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would be wondering whether to force cuts in another capital programme that had already been agreed for another industry, so that he could avoid a crisis at the British Widget Corporation.

That is what actually happens, year in, year out, as a consequence of the state ownership of industry. If all that was not enough, it is possible that, at about the same time if there were such a Minister, the Secretary of State for England would crash in to tell the Prime Minister and the Cabinet that, if anyone tried to close the loss-making Widget plant in England, he would resign to join the English Nationalist party. That is the way in which these industries are treated and managed. One could not run the proverbial alcoholic reception in a brewery in that way, let alone an industry, but it is an inescapable feature of the state ownership and political control of business.

I lived with that for six years. I had to fight like a tiger against my colleagues in the Treasury to ensure that what was then British Leyland—it is Rover Group now—could proceed with the K engine, which is now the heart of its most successful model. I had to decide that case on the basis of the management's estimates of the market. It was an act of great courage, because most of the time those estimates were wrong. Fortunately, on this occasion, they were right. I had to persuade the Treasury to let me authorise expenditure on the car which became the Jaguar XJ6, and without which the group would not have a product line at all by now. Again, happily, I was right rather than wrong. I had to fight for the 524 Rolls-Royce engine, and again, I was right.

I am sure that other products on which I lost the battle might have been even better investments. As a politician, I had to make those choices and persuade other politicians that they were right. I was not the right man to do that, and nor was any other politician. If I got some of the decisions right, it was as much by luck as by good judgment. On products ranging from groundnuts to that expensive motor car in Ulster, my predecessors over the years got many decisions wrong, and that would happen again.

A while ago, we discussed some aspects of British Telecom. The process to which I have referred led the Post Office, which used to run our telephones, to ration telephones and neglect the capital investment which was so desperately needed to operate a decent telephone system. We all know what a party line is. Of course, not everyone in the House sticks to it. Sometimes it is hard to find one. People make up their own. I suspect that we have heard a bit of that this morning from the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East. From time to time, I thought that his was a better party line than that used by his leader and some of his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am enjoying the right hon. Gentleman's speech very much. Does he accept that, if one of us is to make up Labour party policy, it is better that I do it than that he does it?

Mr. Tebbit: I am an independent sort of fellow now. If I were offered a consultancy, I might be able to do the hon. Gentleman's party some good. I did my party some good from time to time, as he may remember. If he wants some advice on a strictly commercial basis, I will give it to him. I could even do so in private, although I might leak from time to time.

I was talking about party lines. Do we remember what a party line was? It was an arrangement used when British Telecom was nationalised, by which two subscribers had to share one line because the business could not provide lines for all the people who wanted them. That is what customer service was about in nationalised industries.

When British Telecom was denationalised, one call in 25 failed to get through. Now, less than 0·5 per cent. of calls are not immediately successful. When British Telecom was denationalised, there were 20 million lines; the figure is now 26 million. There were 8,000 miles of optic fibre cables in existence then; there are now 800,000 miles. There was then but one digital switching unit; now the whole main network has digital switching, and 73 per cent. of all British Telecom lines are served by modern digital local exchanges.

British Telecom has created a mobile phone cellular network with more than half a million customers. It covers an area in which 97 per cent. of the population live. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will assure my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that it covers every known restaurant in central London.

Itemised billing is now available to 19 million of our customers. All the achievements that I have listed spring largely from an investment programme of £14·5 billion since 1984, without any contribution from the taxpayer or any hassle with the Treasury. British Telecom has not competed for funds with hospitals, schools, defence or anything else in the Government programme. That investment programme currently runs at just less than £3 billion a year.

Last year alone, the Treasury received from British Telecom £1·4 billion in corporation tax and dividends. If that were not enough, let me rub the nose of the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East in it a little. He talked about the costs of privatisation. When British Telecom was privatised, the market valued it at about £8 billion. The Government's half share is worth about that figure today.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Because of the profits.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman says that that is because of the profits. I say that it is as a result of the investment that has been made, which has led to profits and better service. If the hon. Gentleman ever became a Minister in a Labour Government in the near future, one tip that I would give him—this is free consultancy—would be not to engage in the folly of buying 2 per cent. of British Telecom shares but to sell what he would have and finance some of the extravagant programmes of his colleagues out of it. That would be a far better way to proceed.

Mr. Brown: Tell the Minister that.

Mr. Tebbit: I would give the same advice to my hon. Friend. Sell the shares and finance hospitals, which are the responsibility of the Government. Hospitals and schools,

not telecoms, are the responsibility of the Government. We can manage British Telecom fine without any call on the taxpayer.

Prices have fallen regularly in real terms throughout British Telecom's privatised life. I started by limiting its price rises to the retail prices index minus three. The current regime requires price rises of the retail prices index minus six and a half. Find me a nationalised industry that performs like that even under a Conservative Government. To find one under a Labour Government is an even harder search.

Today, British Telecom compensates customers if it fails to respond adequately to the demands for installations or for repair of lines. British Telecom gives £13 million a year in cash and in kind to charities and community organisations. This year, it will pay an extra £600,000 to Save the Children alone. Find me a nationalised industry that has similar resources and uses them in that way.

I willingly defend the increases in salary of senior managers in British Telecom. I do so for the following reasons. One of my failures as Secretary of State and as a Minister was to secure adequate salaries for the top management of nationalised industries. One of the reasons why nationalised industries do not have the quality of management that they should have is not only that managers are not prepared to be interfered with all the time by politicians when those managers are trying to do their job but that they see no reason why they should sacrifice the standard of living they would have if they worked in the private sector, either in Britain or abroad. These people are intensely mobile.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tebbit: I will let the hon. Gentleman intervene before I put the bombshell under him.

Mr. Brown: Perhaps I had better make my intervention quickly before the bombshell goes off. I understand the right hon. Gentleman's first point about salary ranges in nationalised industries, but his second point is surely bogus. He is saying that somehow a different and higher calibre of management appears in the privatised public utilities and trading companies as a result of the salary changes. Surely it is the same people who are in management, and they receive dramatically enhanced salaries. The managers whom the right hon. Gentleman criticises in the public sector become brilliant managers in the private sector and deserve the extra money.

Mr. Tebbit: There would have been no way in which I could have persuaded Lord King, then Sir John King, and his chief executive, Sir Colin Marshall, to join British Airways without an absolutely firm assurance that the company would be denationalised. The same is true of many senior managers of our privatised companies today.

To continue my point about salaries, a little while ago British Telecom was searching for a very senior executive just below board level to head up the function of planning for our future development. We scoured not only this country and Europe, but the United States to find the right man. We found him, but we had to pay him a salary that was out of line with the average of many of our executives in order to secure him to work for British Telecom. We did so to give the sort of service to our telephone customers that those in America have enjoyed for many years because their telephone companies are in the private sector. That is part of the consequence of the absurd structure of nationalisation that we had in the past.

Mr. Grylls *rose*——

Sir Michael Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Tebbit: I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me if I do not give way, as I do not want to speak for much longer. I hope that they will participate later.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Where is the bombshell?

Mr. Tebbit: Perhaps the Opposition cannot see it. If they reintroduced a system under which we could not get the quality of management, either at home or from abroad, necessary for our nationalised industries and public utilities, we would head straight back to the appalling standards with which we had to put up from those industries in the past.

During the debate on the Bill to nationalise British Telecom, all sorts of amazing allegations were made. It was claimed that public call boxes would be virtually phased out. However, my hon. Friend the Minister has already said that that is far from true—there are many more now, and they are serviceable, too. In those days, there was no special programme to help British Telecom's disabled customers. Today the company is spending more than £3 million a year through its Action for the Disabled Customer. That is the type of change one gets from a company that seeks to serve its customers instead of taking them for granted and rationing telephones to them.

It is true that British Telecom has committed one of the great sins in the Labour party's book. Our work force has fallen from 236,000 to 226,000. It is clear that that number will continue to fall. The Labour party believes that that is a terrible sin and that the payroll should be kept padded. That is exactly what happened——

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Tebbit: If that is not the Labour party's view, why has it criticised British Telecom for reducing its work force? Why does it always raise the spectre of denationalisation leading to job cuts? *[Interruption.]* It is no good for the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and the hon. Member for Brent, South gabbling away to each other; we know about the criticisms from the Labour party. It has criticised British Telecom for reducing its work force, while improving the quality of the product, reducing the price, increasing profits and improving capital investment. Such is the burden of the case against British Telecom put by the Opposition.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: As represented by the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tebbit: No, as represented by Opposition Members. It is important to note that British Telecom has also preserved a research and development programme of more than £200 million a year as well.

We still do not know what the Labour party would do to British Telecom if it had the chance, or what it would do to Mercury. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East has proposed that the Government shareholding should be bought back up to 51 per cent. We did not hear what comes next. Does the hon. Gentleman imagine that the shareholders manage the company? Perhaps some

[Mr. Tebbit]

Opposition Members are naive enough to imagine that that is the case, but the company is managed by the board. Would the board receive instructions from the shareholders as to what it should do? Would errant directors be fired by the shareholders if they did not do what they were told? The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East should tell us.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Just one.

Mr. Tebbit: I would take that stoically.

Let us consider the serious point that the hon. Gentleman is trying to evade. Would there be any interference from the majority shareholder in the management of the company? Answer comes there none. What would be the effect upon the interests of the minority of shareholders of any such activity by the majority shareholder? There may be plenty of legal precedents that would restrain such interference were it judged to be against the interests of other shareholders.

If what we have been told today represents the thought-out programme of the Labour party, it is clear that it is incompetent nonsense, springing from sheer ignorance and prejudice. If there is some other agenda, we have not been told of it.

I worked for British Airways for 17 years when it was a nationalised industry. I know what it was like. Dear God, it was a dreadful period. Now, we have the world's finest airline. That was not true when it was nationalised, and it could not have happened were it still nationalised. The nationalised days were the days when the company was not allowed to order the aeroplanes it needed. It was not even allowed to choose the aircraft it wanted, but it was expected to run an airline. No wonder it was rated somewhere down on a level with some of the east European airlines in passenger estimation. It was treated as though it was an east European airline by an east European-style Government. *[Interruption.]* Do the Opposition seriously suggest that British Airways is not a better airline than it was when it was nationalised?

Mr. Boateng: The right hon. Gentleman has gone over the top.

Mr. Tebbit: Have I gone over the top by suggesting that British Airways could not be effectively managed when it was nationalised? If that is what the hon. Gentleman calls "over the top", he ain't heard nothing yet.

Let us consider the conflict of interests between the regulator and the regulated if they are in the same ownership. What about South West Water? Before it was privatised, it twice polluted the water supply of thousands of its customers.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: It will never do it again.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman is quite right that it will not, and I will tell him why. When it did so in the past, any fine that was levied was paid by the taxpayer, and that is why those fines were never adequate. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury know that that was a daft idea because, if one fined the water authority, it would just bust its external financing limit and the taxpayer would have to pay it anyway. Today, if South West Water were fined, it would come straight out of the bottom line, because it would hit the shareholders' profits. That is why, as the hon. Gentleman has said, it will not do it again.

There is no possibility that a Government can properly regulate and, at the same time, own a business. That is one of the chief reasons why changes had to be made.

Not all denationalised businesses are big ones. A few days ago, I received a letter from my constituent, Mr. Leggett. He runs a successful transport business, which is now part of a Leeds-based company known as Pointbid plc. A few years ago that company bought British Waterways freight division. The relevant section of that letter states:

"In June, 1988, British Waterways Board sold the major part of their loss-making Freight Division to the private sector. Pointbid plc—part of the Leggett Freightways Group—was established to run those former British Waterways board assets as a going concern; within a year of its purchase it was turned into a profitable company. Due to our depot locations largely being alongside, in the main, major inland waterways, we have become increasingly aware of the environmental, energy and cost benefits in barging commodities as opposed to road transport. Recently, for example, we diverted some of our ship cargoes from the Humber ports away from the usual road transport routing to barge; each ship cargo so diverted has taken from the road system over 300 road vehicle journeys!"

Why was that not done when it was in national ownership? What restraint prevented the British Waterways Board from using the same get-up-and-go initiative that my constituent's company used?

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend will know that Mr. Leggett's partner, Graham Linney, is a constituent of mine and a co-operator in that successful company. My right hon. Friend will probably go on to relate that, in addition to the environmental benefits that have accrued from the change of management, the letter from which he quoted says that, in the first year of operation by private owners, that division of British Waterways has, for the first time, made a profit.

Mr. Tebbit: One is almost embarrassed by the number of examples one could cite of the success of denationalised industries. Against that fact, we have only the carping and idiotic criticism of Labour Members to the effect that there is something wicked about making profits, even when the consumer is being far better served. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) wish to intervene? He would be well advised not to do so, because he has neither the knowledge nor the intellectual capacity to join in the debate. In any event, he has not been here to listen to it. He has probably been dragged in to add weight to the number of Labour Members present.

What difference would be made by the Labour party's proposals for British Telecom? What is it about BT that Labour Members hate? Do they want to stop us giving money to charity, to restrict the amount of aid given to our disabled customers or to end the system of compensation to customers who do not get the service they should have? Do they want to go back to a formula of RPI-plus as it used to be, as opposed to RPI minus 6·5 per cent? Do they want to cut the capital investment programme, or are they satisfied with what is being done by the management of BT?

Do Labour Members think that they are better able to make the judgments that the directors and board of BT now make? Do they want to substitute the judgment of politicians and officials for those of people who have

responsibility for running the business? Or do they just want to fool around, wasting public money, taking a shareholding stake to raise the holding of the state to 51 per cent. and then make no other change? The embarrassed silence on the Opposition Benches is sufficient answer for those here and outside to judge.

12.2 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Minister began by charging the Opposition with dogma, a serious charge, the assumption being that at least since 1945, Labour Members have consistently clung to the concept of nationalisation as a remedy for the economic ills of the United Kingdom economy.

The Minister will recall that from time to time there were cracks in that dogmatic approach. The story is told —apocryphally, it is alleged—of the time when the then Prime Minister, now Lord Wilson, was at a Cabinet meeting during the 1964-70 period when there was a discussion about the need to extend public ownership. He is alleged to have said, "It will take a lot to persuade the British people that we can manage Marks and Spencer as efficiently as we have managed the Co-operative movement."

Any historical analysis of the issues that we are debating must take account of the fact that between 1951 and 1964 and between 1970 and 1974, Conservative Governments were not noted for their desire to change the basis of ownership of what were public utilities. One must derive from that the conclusion that while there may have been contemporary justification for the nature of a particular form of ownership, when there is a radical change in the nature of that ownership, what occurs may be an irreversible change in the circumstances of the industry, making the possibility of turning the clock back virtually impossible. I suspect that that judgment can be made with more certainty in the sort of period of great technological advance that we in this country have enjoyed in the last 10 to 15 years.

At issue in the 1990s should be not the question of the nature of the ownership but the nature of the service to the consumer. There is little doubt that any attempt to reverse the privatisations that have taken place would be diversionary in the achievement of the economic objectives of those companies, that it would take a great deal of time and that it would cost a lot of money. From a historical perspective, one need only examine the fate of the British road haulage industry since 1945 to see how damaging a continued change in ownership can be.

It should be the duty of government to establish and implement a preference for the breaking up of monopolies, be they national state or national private ones. I see no justification for the renationalising of any companies that have been privatised since the Conservatives came to power in 1979. That is not to say that I agree entirely with everything said by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), with his characteristically robust approach. He cited the United States as an example, and that is interesting in connection with telecommunications because the nature of competition there between the existing companies is more acute than it is in this country. One must wonder whether telecommunications in Britain would have been better served by the creation not of one extremely large company such as BT but by the creation of a number of smaller companies with a greater capacity to compete one with the other.

Mr. Tebbit: British Telecom is smaller than the companies in the United States, so the hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong on that point. Competition in America is not, in general, between companies offering services to the same people. It is competition such as exists here in our water authorities, with companies offering services to people in different parts of the country. He may be aware that BT has a 20 per cent. holding in an American telecommunications company and is hopeful of engendering more competition in the United States to benefit the consumers there in the way we are benefiting them here.

Mr. Campbell: In size, we are comparing two substantially different markets—the United Kingdom with a market of about 55 million people and the United States market of about 250 million. I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's point about the regional nature of the competition, and on that footing there might have been an argument for a Scottish Telecom rather than a United Kingdom-wide one. But that does not detract from the principle that if we are concerned about the creation of an efficient system at the most effective cost to the consumer, a degree of competition is of great importance.

As the right hon. Gentleman referred to the airlines, I cite him—I accept that it is anecdotal—the experience of those of us who fly regularly between Edinburgh and London. In the days when British Airways had a virtual monopoly on that route, the standards of service on the aircraft were less than one would have desired. As soon as British Midland was introduced to that route and the Glasgow route, the standard of service improved dramatically. That shows that genuine competition is of great value to the consumer. Few of those who travel regularly between Scotland and London would view with equanimity the idea that there should be less than two carriers on those routes.

Last year, I chose to replace my mobile telephone. I went back to British Telecom, from whom I bought my previous instrument and who dealt with me extremely well on the previous occasion. I went to the British Telecom shop in Princes street in Edinburgh and was received with great civility and efficiency. In due course, the instrument was provided and I asked for a car kit—a device that allows one to talk without committing a road traffic offence. Although the equipment was first class, by the time British Telecom had finished fitting it, much of the interior of my car was hanging off. The bracket on which the mobile telephone should fit would not stay upright but kept falling over. I complained to the chairman of the company, the fire service was sent for and the problem was remedied. I pronounced the fact that I was entirely satisfied. Like all proper consumers, I had declined to pay my cheque, so I then paid it. I received a polite letter acknowledging it and expressing the hope that everything would be perfectly all right in the future. Three weeks later, I received a demand from a debt collecting agency in Wolverhampton, telling me that if I did not pay British Telecom, a summons would be issued for the outstanding amount. Again, British Telecom apologised about that. There may therefore be scope for arguing that British Telecom could do better in some areas.

[Mr. Campbell]

May I argue in favour of competition? A state enterprise such as the National Coal Board, which some people believe abuses its monopoly power by virtue of the fact that the ownership of coal and, therefore, the right to allow the winning of the resource, rests with the National Coal Board. Some people believe—I am one of them—that it would make sense to take that right away from the National Coal Board, either to rest with the appropriate Secretary of State and the Government, or to be given to some other institution. Other operators could then be issued with licences to operate. Such an element of competition could be embraced by the Government and could introduce competitive activity, which would benefit the consumer.

In moving away from state-owned enterprise, proper account should be taken of the need to encourage employee share ownership and employee buy-outs and to ensure that, as part of the newly privatised arrangements, a company is obliged to inform employees to permit them to participate, as far as possible, in the way a company is organised, or at least to consult them about how a company is to conduct itself.

It was inevitable that this debate has concentrated on the Labour party's policies. With due deference to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), he gave the impression of someone who had turned up at the Old Bailey on a quiet Friday hoping to have an early lunch, only to find himself landed with a dock brief in which he had little confidence. His enthusiasm for giving way was as much an endeavour to be courteous to those who sought to intervene as an attempt to deflect attention from the substance of his speech.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: I shall give way when I have developed the point. To say that the most radical proposal that the Labour party has on competition is to take British Telecom into what is described, but not properly defined, as "social ownership", hardly seems like a manifesto for a radical Government of the 1990s. The hon. Gentleman failed to give the precise amount that would be paid by way of compensation or to explain the principle that lies behind market value. Market value may mean any number of things. Is it market value as between a willing buyer and a willing seller, or is it on the assumption that there is no proposal to acquire compulsorily? Alternatively, is it on the assumption that there is a proposal to acquire compulsorily? We are entitled to hear the hon. Gentleman explain more fully that matter of principle.

Mr. Brown: If the hon. and learned Gentleman is happy with the phrase, "a willing buyer and a willing seller," I am happy with the phrase as a description of our approach to those matters, However, the hon. and learned Gentleman is a little unfair to me when he says that I gave way to Conservative Members as a device. Conservative Members, particularly those who have served in Committees, will know that I always give way, as a matter of practice.

Mr. Campbell: I do not wish to be unfair to the hon. Gentleman if his sole motivation was courtesy—it would be churlish of me not to accept his explanation—but he cannot be allowed to use that to slide away from the question about a willing buyer and a willing seller. What is the nature of the market in which they operate? The hon. Gentleman may be aware that, in the compulsory acquisition of heritable property there is a principle called the "Pointe Gourde"—it is English law, for those who are not familiar with it—which requires, in the assessment for compensation, that no account be taken of the fact that compulsory purchase is being proposed. The mere publication of an intention to acquire compulsorily immediately has a depressing effect on value. That is an important issue and I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would have dealt with it before he came to the House and that the Labour party will do so before it goes to the country. It should say whether it intends to acquire British Telecom or part of the shareholding at market value.

Mr. Brown: I have done my best to please the hon. and learned Gentleman by using the phrase that he used. I am satisfied with it if he is. I have been accused of many things, some fairly and others not, but I utterly rebut the charge that I am a lawyer.

Mr. Campbell: It was not necessary for the hon. Gentleman to offer that mitigation. That was obviously the case and no one would throw such an accusation against him. Perhaps I will offer the hon. Gentleman my services as a consultant, paid or even unpaid, because he has still not dealt with the important question of which kind of market price will be paid by a willing buyer. If he cannot do so today, he and his colleagues must do so before they take their manifesto before the people of the United Kingdom, whenever a general election is called.

Mr. John Marshall: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that a further point that was not dealt with in the speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) was the question of Mercury and how the renationalisation of British Telecom will increase competition. Will it not decrease competition in the telephone industry?

Mr. Campbell: I have no doubt that we shall hear about the proposals for Mercury. It would be curious if Mercury, with no element of public control, were competing with British Telecom, with an element of public control. One does not need to be an expert in such matters to divine that in those circumstances there could be a considerable distortion of the market.

Many questions were put to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, and I shall add some more. Let us suppose that a case was established to show that an undertaking currently in public ownership would be better managed and give a better service to the consumer if it were privatised. Would the Labour party be willing to privatise that undertaking or is its resistance to privatisation one of dogma rather than utility, as the Minister said?

Many of the services about which we are talking are referred to in the United States as utilities. At the risk of stretching the language, surely the issue is to determine what the utility would be to the consumer. If we were able to establish to the intellectual satisfaction of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, if not his emotional satisfaction, that the privatisation of a specific

institution would enable it to give a better service to the consumer, would he be willing to accept that and, if it were within his power, try to bring it about?

My criticisms of the Government's position lie in the fact that it does not seem that all the privatisations carried out have resulted in the degree of competition necessary to produce the most efficient use of resources. In spite of what the Minister said today, I am left with a strong belief that, in many cases, we have turned state monopolies into private ones, which cannot be in the interests of the people of the United Kingdom. That is why I continue with my questioning of the success of the Government's programme. However, I am firmly of the view that there is no justification in 1991, nor will there be in 1992, if it takes until then for the issues to be decided, for any movement back from the privatisations that have taken place.

Mr. Tebbit: If it is any comfort to the hon. and learned Gentleman, when I was in government my view was that if it was possible to arrange competition rather than regulation, competition would be better. I am still happier to assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that the board of British Telecom would far prefer the company to be in fair competition than to be regulated. I hope that the process of moving away from regulation to better competition will continue because I am sure that that would be in the interests of the companies and the consumers.

Mr. Campbell: I have no doubt that hon. Members and people outside the House will have heard what the right hon. Gentleman said. I suspect that it may be within the gift of the Government to give the right hon. Gentleman the opportunity that he and other members of the board of British Telecom would relish and I hope that the Minister will respond to that.

12.24 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and I find myself very much at one with his reflections on the inevitability of privatisation and the totally bizarre view shown in the Labour party proposals put forward by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown).

It is important for us to have a chance to test some of the Labour party's ideas. I compliment the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East on his courtesy, which we all appreciated. It is understood that he is a kindly man. It is therefore painful for me to have to say that he has made himself a hostage to fortune, but he has done us a service by demonstrating how threadbare the Labour party's case is. That was shown even within his argument, which was merely a damage limitation operation.

I am glad that I had the opportunity to hear my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, who is also a kindly man. I thought that he might well have taken the full opportunity to trace the history of nationalisation, which one must do if one is to understand the problems and possible threats to the future that it may cause.

As one would expect, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) with his knowledge of the subject, made an excellent speech highlighting many aspects. I speak from a more modest position. I had two and a half years at the Department of Trade and Industry, part of the time with my right hon. Friend. It is a source of great personal pride that I had some responsibility for denationalisation of British Aerospace and Cable and Wireless, and at the beginning of the process to denationalise British Telecom. I declare an interest in the first two companies and I shall seek to comment on them.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East demonstrated that he was not prepared to give us any of the Labour party's ideas on hurdle rates of return on investment. He said that a Labour Government would pick up £28 billion investment for the water industry during the next decade, which is an interesting addition to what we already know. As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East has not addressed his mind to the fair market value argument.

We were shown a range of uncertainties, but that is part of Labour party history. Everyone who has read the late Lord Shinwell's memoirs will know of the magic moment at the dawn of socialism in 1945 when he went to Transport house and said, "I have responsibility for the coal industry, please give me the plan for the denationalisation of coal", and he was asked, "What plan, mate?" That was the starting point of the great move in the coal industry.

I am a refugee from the steel industry, and had 20 years in the steel and heavy engineering industries. I was nationalised, denationalised and nationalised again, and it was not a pretty experience. I found it insupportable to have to put up with the economic and industrial illiteracy with which I was assailed by Labour Governments who sought to tell us how to do things. When I came to the House, I saw in the Beswick report, the Varley-Kaufman initiative, which a Select Committee roundly condemned and, at every twist and turn, how when a Labour Government seeks state control of industry in this country, they get it dreadfully wrong.

I have some sympathy with the Labour Government's problems because the system is peculiarly designed to make it difficult for Ministers to interfere in industry in our country. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford highlighted that when he spoke of the sixth, seventh and eighth overviews. He, too, was being kind and should have added ninth and 10th overviews—the Prime Ministers of various colours who often feel that they have the final say. Our system makes it extremely difficult for Ministers to intervene, even with the best will in the world.

Although I accept the honesty with which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East put forward his views, he failed to address the realities of life when he spoke of the wonderful way in which he would sidestep the Treasury so that, at one bound, he would be free. He said that he would harness private capital and get out of external financing limits. I know that we should not refer to individuals in a particular part of the House, but if the hon. Gentleman had looked in one direction he would have seen the alarmed faces of some of those sitting here, with whom he might have to work in future.

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he can break down the Treasury ethos he is a brave man.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problem with nationalisation, denationalisation and state ownership of and investment in industry has been the dead hand of the Treasury, which can never decide on anything until it is far too late to make a sensible decision?

Sir Michael Marshall: I would not necessarily disagree, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that if those who manage industry have to route their affairs not only through Whitehall but through Westminster, where they are subject to scrutiny by the House, and if the attendant media problems also come into play, that is a recipe for rendering it impossible to manage a business effectively. Labour adopted the worst of all worlds by taking over internationally competitive manufacturing industries. It is one thing to interfere with an industry with a certain dominance in the domestic market, but steel, aerospace and British Airways are industries which need to be extraordinarily quick off the mark to survive, and nationalising them did great damage.

I appreciate that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East was trying to deal with some of the arguments about Labour's proposals for British Telecom. It is an internationally competitive industry, however, which must produce services for the vast infrastructure of Britain's industry and service sector. If it does not perform that service properly, British competitiveness suffers. BT faces competition from Mercury—I have already declared my interest in Cable and Wireless. Labour is once again falling into the trap of eyeing industries that may have a high profile and may be profitable, while ignoring the damage that nationalising them might do to the underpinning of British industry and our service industries.

I want briefly to go over my experiences in the steel industry. The time in question was not a happy one, but it showed how it was possible for distortions of the market to work over the years in ways that I hope will never recur. This debate allows us to put down markers to ensure that if there is a change of Government the new Government will not, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said, reverse privatisation against the natural trend. Governments of all complexions were involved in political intervention in the steel industry. One of the cruellest problems for Conservative Governments was that caused by having to make a success of socialist-controlled industries.

One of the classic mistakes made in the steel industry was the decision to allocate strip mill facilities to Scotland and Wales—a decision taken by a Conservative Government for political reasons, as was the norm. That process is rounding off now with the tragic closure of Ravenscraig and the story has been repeated often in closures in the north-west, the midlands and the north-east. The build-up during profitable times of the private sector steel industry had a relationship with companies which allowed a certain geographical spread, but all that was thrown into the melting pot once political considerations involving location in Scotland and elsewhere entered the equation. It was all part of the same unhappy experience.

There was also a distortion of competition with the private sector. The Conservative Government in 1979 had to pump £700 million into the British Steel Corporation, which was still running at massive losses—£1·8 billion, as I recall. All that additional funding was in part at the expense of the private sector of the steel industry. There was a thriving private sector on a small scale, but my old home town of Sheffield was virtually wiped out. Little of the industry is left there, because the taxpayers and Government of the day had to bale out British Steel—and that subsidised competition in turn destroyed much of the private sector.

I am glad to say that things are much better today, and British Steel is running well. Clause 4 still exists, however, and that is why it is necessary to put down markers today to ensure that we never go down that route again.

I have also declared my interest in British Aerospace which, was nationalised for such a short time that there was fortunately no opportunity to do a great deal of damage. I want to concentrate on some of the benefits of privatisation that I have observed at first hand. We should not underestimate the real value of employee shareholding. Hon. Members will recall that trade unions marched in protest at Kingston and other British Aerospace plants when this idea was first mooted—yet when it came to it, the vast majority of employees took their free shares, naturally enough; but even more significantly, in 1979-80, 40 per cent. of employees bought additional shares with their own money. Today attitudes towards partnership and the commitment of shopfloor, management and boardroom have radically altered at plants throughout the country.

It was worrying to hear the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East speak about what Labour would do with the water industry. He criticised attempts at diversification. It is prudent to encourage companies to diversify because it can help them to survive some of the swings and troughs of the market. It can also help them in the European imperative, which has not been mentioned in the debate. Cross-ownership between companies in this country and those in other parts of Europe is increasing and in that context many of Labour's arguments are sterile.

In speaking of telecommunications, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East prayed in aid the argument that it was a state activity in other European countries. There are different governmental relationships in that industry, but I say to the hon. Gentleman, "Watch this space". There will be radical changes during the move to privatisation which is already happening in many countries, such as Japan where British industry has been brought in. Nothing is static. I am worried about the old-fashioned Labour concept of state ownership.

Diversification by British Aerospace into the motor industry has kept Rover in this country and has been a key element in maintaining cash flow, counterbalancing the long-term nature of the civil aircraft business. We have recently seen the need for defence expenditure to be variable. All of that suggests that any industry that has an opportunity to diversify is wise to do so.

The privatisation of Cable and Wireless was significant in that it produced Mercury. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford agrees that while British Telecom still massively dominates the market, the principle of competition has been an enormous strength to BT management in carrying out necessary change. It altered BT's relationship with the trade unions and, as my right hon. Friend knows, in some areas the competition is very real. In the City of London, BT has about 60 per cent. and Mercury has about 40 per cent. of the market. Those companies are at the cutting edge of British activity in the service sector.

Competition occurs in areas where there are arguments about price. My right hon. Friend might argue about how that works in practice, but at least the consumer has a choice. That choice extends to Government Departments which have access to both BT and Mercury, and that is beneficial for overseas and long-distance calls. One of the

few remaining bastions where no such choice exists is in the House. Some hon. Members have spoken about that matter and I hope that we shall return to it. Competition has helped BT, Cable and Wireless, and Mercury.

In a revealing passage, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East lapsed into the politics of envy when he talked about top salaries. He gave the unfortunate example of a 140 per cent. increase in pay for the incoming chairman and chief executive of Cable and Wireless, Lord Sharp of Grimsdyke. That increase came about following the strenuous efforts of Lord Glenamara, whom we recall in this House when he was Ted Short, and who simply could not pay his senior executives the going rate; there was massive discontent and people were leaving the company. After privatisation, matters had to be put right. We must be prepared to pay top people the going rate. One of the most outstanding leaders of the newly-privatised telecommunications industry is Lord Sharp of Grimsdyke, who is now retired and in another place. His appointment was a great success, but we must accept the logic of the price tag.

I do not wish to continue with case histories. I hope that I have said enough in comparing the past with what I hope will happen in future. I think that certain lessons have been learnt from the past, but I do not suggest that everything has been perfect. That will never be. One of my worries rests on the time scale of any developments. If private monopolies are created, the role of the regulator becomes all the more important. In Oftel, Sir Bryan Carsberg has presented us with a splendid example. We still have to find ways to ensure that other regulators will be effective, and that will take time. It will take time for us to gain experience, and the public will have to be prepared to live with us until we see how things have worked out in practice.

Much of the criticism of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East about competition does not stand up to examination. There is competition, for example, between one form of energy and another. It is interesting that one of the areas that the hon. Gentleman and his party are picking on for renationalisation is the generating sector of the electricity industry, where there is competition. We did not have a chance to probe the hon. Gentleman on that. It would be interesting to know how far——

Mr. Nicholas Brown: We are not picking on the generating sector of the electricity. We are focusing on the national grid, which is something separate and different.

Sir Michael Marshall: I understand that.

However, anything that begins to divorce the privatised sector from the public sector will, to my mind, bring back all the worries about that interrelationship. If the divorce takes place, we return to the old decision-making chain, which involves the Treasury chain. The hon. Gentleman will not give me much comfort by picking out one part of the process.

I think that I have made my point about capital investment. The argument about prices and profits must be considered more seriously and should not be left to media hype. We know that journalists try from day to day to fill their columns, and that some of them are inclined to make jazzy noises. In a serious debate, however, those who sit on the Opposition Front Bench, and especially the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, who is a shadow Treasury spokesman, must reflect that there has to be some relationship between prices, profitability and investment. There must be some reasonable understanding across the Floor of the House of what is a proper return on capital in capital-intensive industries. The hon. Gentleman is too intelligent not to understand the point and so he decided wisely to skate over that bit of the thin ice.

We cannot ignore all the underlying principles of Labour party policy. Clause 4 is still in place, which bears on control of the means of production and exchange. We know that if a Labour Government were formed who inherited the Labour party's present shopping list, there would be the inevitable argument about whether they would move down the road of clause 4.

Uncertainty is destructive of industry, of competitive international industry and, above all, of the needs of companies—including management and the work force—and of consumers. The Labour party has introduced the element of uncertainty into our debate, against what I believe is a general trend.

We have had a chance to get the flavour of some of the real problems that would be created if a Labour Government were ever able and unwise enough to carry forward the Labour party's present ideas. I hope that those of us who had to suffer the appalling period of external intervention by people who knew little of the businesses in which some of us worked will never forget what ensued. Businesses would be helpless in the hands of a structure that will never succeed in our country.

12.43 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): I do not think that anyone could sensibly deny that there are certain services that only the Government can provide. Defence is an example. The recent conflict in the Falklands and the even more recent conflict in the Gulf showed the world the great strengths of my right hon. Friends the Members for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who was Prime Minister, and for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), who is now Prime Minister, and their Cabinet colleagues. They provided firm leadership and reassurance and, most importantly, implemented the co-ordinated employment of huge resources of military hardware and manpower.

One shudders to think what would have happened had the Labour party been in power at that time. I believe that the Argies would still be in the Falkland Islands and Kuwait would still be occupied by Hussein's forces. We had strong leadership, which took decisive action. That is the contrast between that lot opposite and the Conservative party.

I admit that the Labour party has given this country great service from time to time. For example, four years of socialist rule at the end of the 1970s displayed, to a greater extent than ever before, the gross inefficiencies of nationalisation. Who can forget the beer and sandwiches at No. 10 every week? They are a legend. Deals were made between union leaders and the Prime Minister of the time. The International Monetary Fund—the receiver, although it is now referred to as "the administrator"—arrived on the shores of this land to tell the Labour party how to run an economy. What did we get? Cuts, cuts, cuts.

[Mr. David Evans]

The Labour party's fundamental arguments for nationalisation are always political and economic. As long ago as 1933, Herbert Morrison said of nationalised industries:

"the quality of service will tend to advance and the price charged will tend to fall".

Nearly 60 years later, the Labour party still has not realised that he was talking rubbish, and it is still talking rubbish. It is as simple as that. Far from prices falling, between 1971 and 1982 prices in nationalised industries increased by 380 per cent., and in the retail sector prices rose by 310 per cent.

Nationalised industries, as we all know, were a colossal drain on the public purse. In 1979, £50 million a week was being lost. The steel industry was losing £3 million. I recently visited British Steel with Lord Hesketh. It is now the finest maker of steel in the world. I asked the managing director what the Government could do to help the industry. He said, "You can do one thing: keep out of our business," I pass that message to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown): the best thing that we can do for the industry is to keep out of its business.

The crippling rates of taxation imposed by the previous Labour Government, far from providing funds for a prosperous and efficient national health service, were being used to prop up state monopolies. They did not provide more money for education or health. In 1979-80, the industrial state sector consumed more than a third of the national health service budget. It was clear to the man in the street—although not to the Labour party—that those organisations were not geared to international competition, consumer services or productivity. They were the overstaffed fiefdoms of militant trade unionists. That is what we were faced with, so the economic argument falls.

What of the political argument? We were told that public ownership would be accountable ownership. However, nationalised industry became unaccountable. When Ministers were questioned in the House, they declined to answer on matters that they considered commercial. The poor consumer got nowhere, market forces did not operate, and nor did political forces. The result was that so-called public services served no one.

All the tripe about industries that are owned by the public being taken away from the public is nonsense. They constitute a drag on the public purse and the poor consumer has no say in the matter and no means of redress. The state dips its fingers into his pockets to shore up an inefficient and unaccountable utility. Between 1956 and 1972, the five major nationalised industries lost £1·25 billion. There was only one year in that period when those five industries recorded an overall profit. There is no economic or political case for maintaining or, even more stupidly, resurrecting those state monopolies. It is laughable that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East should say that he wants public ownership to be extended to provide quality services. It is a good job that he is not in charge of the Humber bridge: if he was, there would be cars from there to Acton.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and his Labour colleagues cannot grasp the fact that privatisation forces economic efficiency and, more importantly, results in consumer accountability. Public services do not need the warm and sweaty embrace of the state; they need the cold wind of market forces.

Until my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley entered No. 10 Downing street, the United Kingdom was paying through the nose for Mickey Mouse experiments in economic management. I thank God that the state-owned sector has been reduced by no less than 60 per cent. since the Conservative party came to power. In all, 44 major businesses have been privatised. Their fortunes, as a result, have been rejuvenated.

In 1978-79, the nationalised industries that have since been privatised received Government subsidies of £19 billion. In 1989-90, those same companies back in the private sector contributed £1,500 million to the Exchequer in corporation tax. That money will be spent on hospitals, schools and the individuals in our community who are most in need of care.

Privatisation also provides funds for other social projects that are vital for our quality of life. Today the environment is quite rightly at the top of the Conservative party's political agenda. Last year's environmental White Paper "Our Common Inheritance" lists a number of challenging, but expensive, targets for industry.

The most crucial of our natural resources is water. Since privatisation, the water industry has invested huge sums in its infrastructure. A record £28 billion will be spent over the next decade cleaning water and providing better facilities. Without setting the industry free, such investment would not have taken place. Perhaps the Opposition, who want to snatch the water industry back into the state's clutches, will tell me where they would get the money. It will not come out of a tap; it will come from the taxpayer.

It is astonishing that the Labour party wants us to return to the mess of the 1970s. The Labour party does not want to free us; it wants to regulate us. A new quango is proposed on virtually every page of Labour's new policy document. Why should British Telecom, the gas and water industries return to the 1970s?

The Conservative party wants to free citizens. We do not want to create a bureaucratic black hole into which complaints disappear never to be seen again. Bureaucrats are not the answer. This country was not made great by bureaucratic pen pushers; it was made great by entrepeneurs operating in market conditions. Privatisation has put the "Great" back into Great Britain.

If you will excuse my phraseology, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Labour's approach to the economy can be likened to a lady of the night. On the surface there is fine dressing. It looks new and may even appear glamorous. However, on closer inspection, what is underneath is worn out and wrinkled. The Labour party still wears the old clothes of clause 4. That is closest to Labour Members' hearts. The procession of policy documents from Walworth road, where the last Marxists are to be found, is only cosmetic. Believe me, they cannot hide the fact that the Opposition, unlike Conservative Members, have not learnt the lessons of the 1970s. Therefore, like the lady of the night, they seek to con the punter. I do not think that the British people will be conned by that lot opposite.

12.54 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I wish a clarification from the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) that when he talked about the Mickey Mouse experiment, he was making a general point and not making a personal reference to me.

I suppose that, in a sense, I was part of the experiment with nationalisation, because I, too, worked in the private and nationalised sectors of the British Steel Corporation and United Steel. Therefore, I have had considerable experience. However, unlike right hon. and hon. Members who also worked in the nationalised industry, I was not a high flier. Obviously, I worked on the shop floor and in research. There was considerable trauma in going from the private to the public sector. I will not allow hon. Members to mislead the House—*[Interruption.]* Does the Tory Whip, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) wish to speak? Obviously not.

There are criticisms of nationalised industries. Everyone would admit that. There are faults and failures in many industries, whether private or public. I do not want anyone to be misled. The nationalisation of the steel industry, which I know something about, was a necessity. It is not true to claim that we had a buoyant, viable steel and mining industry before nationalisation.

Sir Michael Marshall: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman with great interest. Like him, I am an ex-United Steel man and, by extension, a BSC man. The hon. Gentleman must be careful about what he is saying. The profit record of the steel industry at the time of nationalisation in 1967 was made during a long post-war boom. We can argue about whether we were riding with the tide, but the problem is that if one threatens to nationalise a company, investment dries up. That is the nature of things. One cannot justify putting forward more money when one does not know what compensation one will receive. That was one of our big problems with nationalisation. I have much fellow feeling with the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he will play it straight on that point.

Mr. Michie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I understand what he is saying. Of all private steel companies at that time, United Steel was making a profit. Also, by coincidence, it was investing more than others in research in the private steel industry. I think that there was about £9 million profit in the year before nationalisation. In those days, that was quite a lot of money. I do not think that that can be said for general steels which were obviously going through problems, particularly investment, which nationalisation helped to some extent.

We saw some of the mistakes that were made on nationalisation. Although I am still very much a supporter of public ownership in certain crucial industries, I am not happy with the practice of state capitalism, which is precisely what nationalised industries were. Although the Government appear to be hostile towards taxpayers having shares in crucial industries, they do not seem to have the same hostility towards crucial industries being literally controlled by foreign investment.

The obvious case that comes to mind and which was redressed slowly but surely concerns Kuwait and the shares in British Petroleum. We must bear in mind that there are interests in this nation that we should look after without being too dogmatic one way or the other.

On the demise of the steel industry in Sheffield, the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) referred to the east end of Sheffield, which he knows as well as I do. I accept that it has been devastated. Similar devastation of industries and areas occurred in the private-sector system also as a result of the lack of investment and—I have a bee in my bonnet about this—because the Government allowed Europe to dictate the steel and engineering closures that should be made in this nation. I believe that the British suffered an unfair proportion of such cuts as a result of the edict from Europe and that our Government should have resisted that more fully.

It was not only the nationalised industries that were falling apart—those in the private sector were closing at the same rate, if not faster. Many who know my area know that it used to have large, proud steel and engineering firms, but they no longer exist. They have been bulldozed and, in their place, we have the retail sector which is the theme of the day. A strong manufacturing base is, however, a darn sight better than a whole load of leisure centres and supermarkets. We should not get this out of proportion and say that the failure of our steel and engineering companies was due to nationalisation, because the failure would have been equal if not greater had they remained in the private sector.

Conservative Members have said that the first "smell" of a future Labour Government intervening in industry —I use the word "intervene" advisedly rather than the words "take over" or "renationalise"—will have an immediate effect on share prices and will rock the market, causing all sorts of problems. Out of sheer fascination I read most of the financial pages in the Sunday newspapers instead of the normal news which I find pretty boring. The financial pages, however, are interesting with share prices rising and falling all the time at any little smell or rumour, never mind one of a Labour Government taking over.

Even now the share price of fairly large industries can drop because someone like Lord Hanson decides to buy 2 per cent. of a company. Is that a hostile bid or not? Should ICI defend it or not? If it does, it is admitting that it is weak; but if it does not defend the bid, it will be in even greater trouble and the share price will drop. What does Lord Hanson do then? He not only says, "I am not interested," but, "I am not interested, so it must be no good." The share price then drops and in come the predators.

We should not worry about a few share prices dropping because a Labour Government may intervene in industry. Every week the interventions of the power bosses and financial houses cause more problems for the share price than could any future Labour Government. It is a red herring for Conservative Members to use that argument.

People make a fortune buying and selling shares—not to enhance the company because most of the time the company is of no interest to them, but to break it up and strip its assets which is how the financial houses get fatter and richer while the workers in the industries finish up on the dole. Unemployment is the biggest scandal today——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Gentleman has only just arrived.

Mr. Skinner: I was here first thing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) is absolutely right about asset stripping. My

[Mr. Skinner]

constituency contains the 100-year-old firm of Reeve-Burgess, which has been taken over by Plaxton, which is headed by David Matthews. Reeve-Burgess was a winning manufacturing firm, with sky-high productivity and profits of £60,000 in May which looked like being repeated this month, yet 180 jobs are going down the road in July because Plaxton has decided to strip its assets and transfer the work to Scarborough. In addition to facing the Government's inflationary policies and massive unemployment, we have to listen to Conservative Members talking like that.

Mr. Michie: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. The loss of a firm is bad enough, but those 180 jobs will never be replaced. The employees end up on the dole, with the taxpayer paying. Strangely enough, the Tories do not seem to moan about profits from asset-stripping which affects people's jobs and livelihoods and makes them a burden on the state. We hear nothing from Conservative Members about the private sector in that regard, except the occasional proud boast that those marvellous big private companies give more to charities than the nationalised industries used to give. I much appreciate the kind hearts that lead the large industries to give to charity. If we had a much more socialist economy and a more caring society, we would not need so much money to be given to private charities. But, of course, the Conservative Government do not recognise that.

Both large and small successful firms can be taken over by predators. That affects jobs and the value of shares. How will the Government protect essential industries, such as the water industry, from such predatory takeovers in future? I accept that regulations may be used, but I shall deal with that point later.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is right about small firms. I worked in small private companies before I joined United Steel, as it was known before the steel industry was nationalised. Those small firms had family concerns and some accountability to the work force, but most of them have disappeared—not because they were inefficient, had production problems or lacked orders, but because predators bought and sold shares above their heads. The people who thought that they owned the factory woke up one morning and found that they no longer owned or controlled it. Within weeks or sometimes months those companies disappeared.

The classic example of what I described is a company called Tyzack Sons and Turner Heeley, for which I worked as an apprentice. There was nothing wrong with the company. It still had orders for exports. Hostility between companies forced people to buy shares and then the company simply to obtain the trademark. Not only does that company no longer trade, but the whole site has been bulldozed to save rates, taxes and so on. What good is that to the work force or, indeed, the country?

The Government favour such a predatory attitude in our essential industries. That is wholly unacceptable. The marketplace should have no say in our crucial industries or economic planning because at the end of the day if it does, it means that foreign companies and financial houses dictate the odds when the elected Government of the day should make the decisions. There is no accountability to the nation or to the consumer.

We are being held to ransom by private monopolies which are there for all to see. There is no real competition in water prices, despite the claims that are made. In telecommunications there is no real competition with British Telecom. More or less the same monopoly persists, but it operates all for profit and not for anything else. Conservative Members have said that British Telecom is much more efficient and up to date than a few years ago when it was nationalised. With hand on heart I agree that that is the case. British Telecom had been neglected over the years. There was some mismanagement, but I remind right hon. and hon. Gentlemen that the telephone companies that were nationalised in the first place were a byword for quality. They set standards in cable and everything else in the electrical and electronic industries. All the standards were set down by the nationalised industry years ago and the system worked correctly then. The reason why the industry went a little wrong later was neglect on the part of management. It was not the fault or the philosophy of public ownership.

Although this is on a smaller scale, there is a prime example of how the Government are irresponsible in allowing some of our crucial industries to go directly into the private sector. Over the years we all must have received complaints from people seeking to buy or sell a house that the estate agents forced their clients into bidding up blind. People do not know the customer or the price and they are screwed by the estate agents. Many hon. Members, including me, took the matter up many years ago. I finally received a telephone message from the Minister responsible who said that he was sorry for the delay but that he could not get agreement from the estate agents on a code of practice. Estate agents were screwing consumers and the taxpayers, yet the powerful Government could not persuade them to agree to a code of practice.

That was only estate agents. If the Government cannot control estate agents, despite some statutory instruments that will protect customers to some extent, what hope do they have of controlling financial powers, such as international and multinational companies? They have no hope whatever. It is irresponsible to follow the dogma that no public intervention in crucial industries should take place. If the Government have trouble with small companies, there is no way in which they will be able to deal with the big multinationals.

I want to make one point plain: although we may have differences over private and nationalised industries, it would be totally irresponsible of the Government, because of dogma, to allow the nation's crucial industries to be at the mercy of the fat cats of the City. That is not good for the nation and I do not believe that the nation will allow it.

1.9 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): This has been an interesting debate, not least because of the speech made by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). He is, as we have all remarked, kind and generous, and he is obviously bright. During his hour-long ramble, one thing became overwhelmingly clear to me: he is too bright to believe the nonsense that detains the Labour party in its time warp on the question of ownership. However, he is perhaps not bright enough—God knows, no one in the Labour party is—to see a way out. He should take the one great intellectual bound

which, with one leap, would set him free. He should accept some of the simple truths about state and private ownership that are clear not only to a narrow minority on the far right of the political spectrum in Britain, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury made clear, are lessons that are becoming clear throughout the world.

I shall not detain the House with what is surely common ground, but let us consider some of the lessons that we in the centre and on the centre right of politics might learn about ownership either by the state or by private individuals. The debate should not be a philosophical ramble about the ownership of shares. It should be about ordinary people and how they receive the services offered by state-owned enterprises or those liberated into private ownership. It is ordinary people who matter.

Ultimately, the issue is about how well the trains run, whether they arrive on time, whether they are clean, and whether one can buy a hot cup of tea at a reasonable price or a decent sandwich that does not taste like cardboard. To me, it does not matter whether the service is provided by a Labour Government or a Conservative Government, by a state-run enterprise or by a private company. I want basic standards of service. Any intelligent person does not consider the dogma of whether a service should be owned by the state or by a private individual or a combination of the two. He wants to consider the combination that delivers quality of service to individuals.

While seeking the answers, we should not make the mistake of assuming that the arguments in favour of private ownership are so clear that they do not need to be restated. One thing that is clear is that in the days immediately after the second world war, when the Labour Government set themselves on the path to nationalisation, they had a great justification for doing so. I believe that one of the things that Conservative Members are not sufficiently able to accept is that there were great deficiencies in the old management styles which were the norm in the 1940s. There was a sense of them and us, and of managers or owners—or at least, those who were directors being disengaged from the business and not being involved with those whom they employed in a co-operative effort to ensure better quality and standards. They were paternalistic.

I remember a wonderful description of that sadly peculiarly British feature of the relations between the board and the shop floor. It was in the first book ever published in this country that considered the theory and practice of management called "Up the Organisation", by Peter Townsend. He had a marvellous way of subdividing the book in headings from A to Z and I shall never forget the first sentence of chapter B, which said "B is for the board of directors. It is useful to have someone on the board of directors who knows where the factory is." One could sense that that was a reflection of a spirit in British industry of directors who dined in their own dining rooms, who wore suits while the workers wore overalls, and who no doubt studied business plans and met regularly with their bankers but had little practical involvement in the management of their companies. Not only was that a cynical abdication of their responsibility, but, more important, when a vacuum was created at the top of those businesses, the trade unions said, "Thank you" and quickly filled them.

I will give examples of that, the first from the motor industry, which I know well from personal experience. Only recently, companies such as the old British Leyland—the British Motor Corporation and now the Rover Group—accepted that it was a good idea for draughtsmen, who are referred to as professionals in the industry, to visit the shop floor to see how the designs that they put on the drawing board could be manufactured.

That was the single greatest lesson the Japanese taught the British. When one sees it applied in factories such as that which I used to have the honour to represent, in Oxford, East, at Cowley, one appreciates the way in which British workers can—surprise, surprise—produce goods of just the same quality as their Japanese counterparts, because it is not a function of how intelligent or willing they are but of how organisation and management can make a business sparkle.

My first warning to the Government is that we should not assume that there is any automatic merit in the word "private" and that somehow, because something is private, it must work. That is not true and there are many cases to show that where management abdicated its responsibility and allowed a vacuum to be created, it was quickly and willingly filled by the trade unions.

The process of nationalisation, understandably enthused over by the Labour Government after the war, simply replaced bad with worse. Nationalisation carries with it inherent technical faults. That should by now be common cause between us and no longer be regarded as even worthy of debate.

There is the technical fault of reliance in nationalised industries on funding determined essentially by the size of the public sector borrowing requirement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) brilliantly exposed that. It is a sorrow that he will not be with us in the next Parliament, and that is the best possible justification for postponing the date of the next general election for as long as possible. That would enable us to have a few more speeches like his, brilliantly witty and hitting the point absolutely.

That reliance on public capital has, under successive Governments of both complexions, resulted in chronic capital underfunding. That underfunding and underinvestment in nationalised industries across the whole spectrum have in turn led, in effect, to a subsidy of running costs rather than to the provision of capital for investment. That, in turn, has led to a whole culture of further reliance, following another abdication of responsibility, this time not even to a definable source of authority but into the limbo of the civil service, and that has been to the detriment of all the nationalised industries.

Another technical inherent flaw in nationalisation is the sense in which civil servants—who are employed by Government to regulate the affairs of Government and who are sympathetic to the specific and discrete concerns of Government—are inherently unsympathetic to the needs of individual businesses. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford gave an amusing account of the processes of meetings, disagreements and second-guessing that is commonplace wherever there is that interface between the civil service and industry.

Intelligent Governments recognise that it is not a question of personal antipathy and ideology—that it is not a question of liking or disliking—but that it is a structural impossibility to have two groups of intelligent people, both

[Mr. Steve Norris]

of whom have separate priorities, and imagine that they can come together and work as one with the single priority of making sure that the business operates properly.

The third structural and inherent flaw in the concept of nationalisation is the total absence of incentives—not only monetary but even of encouragement by a management that is dedicated to making a discrete business work. The death knell of socialism is the fact that the technical and structural defects in the underlying principle of socialism —nationalism—mean that it simply does not work in practice. It is dreadfully sad to have to recognise that we live in a world in which financial incentives must play a part. However, given that it is so clear that people must be given a stake in the enterprises in which they work, so that they work a little harder for themselves and their families, we should recognise that that concept is now the reality of the world. Those of us who accept that and build on it to make a better basis for British industrial management are those who have come to terms with reality.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Norris: Before I give way to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is a regular attender, may I point out for the benefit of those who will read our proceedings in *Hansard* that he joined us only a few moments ago and therefore missed the pleasure of hearing the hour-long speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and the significant contribution of my hon. Friend the Minister. The hon. Gentleman no doubt has something interesting to offer.

Mr. Skinner: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the national health service should be privatised?

Mr. Norris: Of course not, and neither do my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Health. I believe that the health service should remain free at the point of delivery to those who need it. However, I do not believe that a pound of the money that is expended on the national health service should be wasted by the chronic overmanning and inefficiency inherent when it was run more by the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees than by efficient managers who want the best out of the service. I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman is so locked into the neolithic idea of delivering services that he makes that greatest of all errors. He imagines that only a cleaner employed by the Government can clean properly. The dreadful irony is exactly the reverse—only a cleaner employed by a company which cares enough about its work, because its contract may not be renewed, will do the job properly.

Mr. Bill Michie *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Norris: I cannot allow a further intervention because it would be extremely discourteous to my hon. Friends, who have been here throughout the morning, and because Opposition Members, too, wish to speak— *[Interruption.]* Did I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) refer to the embarrassment of some Derbyshire Members over the Bookbinder affair? I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford is not here at the moment as I know that he has a passing interest in the matter. It may be more instructive for the hon. Gentleman to consider that.

The greatest lesson of the nationalisation debate is not the fact that, in 1979, publicly owned businesses were costing the taxpayer £50 million a week, which the taxpayer no longer has to find, although that was dramatic enough. Neither is it the fact that the proceeds of denationalisation have raised £33,000 million, which can be spent on much more needed public services, including health. It is not even the fact that so many more people now participate in the ownership of those companies and therefore have an interest in the quality of service offered. When we consider the long list of nationalised industries that have been privatised, such as British Telecom, British Airways, British Steel, British Aerospace and Cable and Wireless, we see that the losses, underinvestment, intelligent and practical management starvation, have given way to success so that those companies now lead the world in their own sectors in investment, innovation and their desire to expand into new markets, often overseas.

I shall make my final point briefly as hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friends, have been extraordinarily indulgent in allowing me to speak for so long.

We should relate this philosophical debate to the service offered to ordinary people. Anyone who imagines that the service level provided in a cafeteria in socialist Russia is better than here, or is or was better in any of the central European countries where the state regulated standards and provided facilities and services, has obviously never been to those countries. The wonderful American philosophy, "Have a nice day"—vulgar and even, on occasions, mildly offensive though it may be to us reserved Brits—expresses one of the greatest and most important truths of nationalisation and denationalisation. When one has to care whether the customer will return because, if one does not, one's business and ultimately one's job might be on the line, the service offered tends to be more generous, efficient and better regulated. That is the key to this debate and on that basis I earnestly pray that, to the list of nationalisation, denationalisation and renationalisation—the Government have embarked on a further process of denationalisation—we shall never have to add the word re-renationalisation.

1.27 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) gave us, as usual, a lively and entertaining speech. He said that financial incentives were always necessary—some of us would dispute that. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to that in relation to the health service—a public service. But the Tories have a funny idea about financial incentives. They give the rich more tax cuts and more money, while making the poor poorer. That is their idea of financial incentive, but it does not work.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest talked about the 1940s and the idea of the owners being against the workers and detached from them—the "them and us" mentality. What has changed? We only have to look at those huge pay rises to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) referred to see that the owners take the attitude, "Do what we say, not

what we do." That concept is inherent in the private ownership system that the hon. Member for Epping Forest was defending.

The title of this debate is interesting. The Government dare not include the word "privatisation" in the title because people know that privatisation equals a rip-off and public squalor, and they are right. The Government put the emphasis on nationalisation which, at its best, is public ownership. We all know that there have been problems with that in practice, but the aim of nationalisation is public ownership, which is achieved when nationalisation works. Its objective is to secure for the workers the fruits of their labours. They do not get them now, and they certainly did not get them in the past, when there was massive exploitation of working people, with huge profits for a few and low pay, long and arduous hours and conditions of work and poverty and unemployment for the many.

The purpose of nationalisation was to do something about that system and to take industry into public ownership. The theory was that we could not control what we did not own. At its best, public ownership is perceived to be necessary—for instance, to secure worthwhile jobs and to protect whole industries.

My colleagues from the north-east regularly mention shipbuilding, which has been destroyed in this country. We are now at the mercy of ships built by other nations, yet we are supposedly a maritime nation. The Government wiped out that industry with their dogma.

It is perfectly sensible to plan. We all plan for the future, both for the short term and for our old age. Planning is recognised as a virtue in private life, but somehow it is believed that capitalist nations should not plan the running of their economies—they must be left to market forces.

Of course there have been problems with nationalisation in the past, and Conservative Members have made hay with them. In the well known phrase, "Nationalisation plus Lord Robens doesn't equal socialism," as the left used to describe putting one man in control. Such nationalisation failed; the compensation given to the previous owners loaded a huge debt on the new ones.

The corporate model failed, as did the Stalinist model, because it was too centralised. Herbert Morrison based the running of such enterprises on the big private corporations, so, like those corporations, they lacked a democratic element.

The Stalinist model as seen in the Soviet Union also failed, but we must remember that, with its programme of nationalisation, the Soviet Union achieved huge growth to emerge from its feudal status of the early years—so much so that its economic growth rate still places it in the top 10 European countries. However, its system failed for three main reasons, the first of which was the huge arms race on which it embarked to try to keep pace with the United States. All that useless production meant that the money was not available for economic development.

In the main—this is another, perhaps good, reason for failure—the Soviet Union was not imperialist—*[Interruption.]* I concede that there were exceptions such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but the Soviet Union was nothing like as imperialist as the west, which exploited third-world resources by taking them over lock, stock and barrel without paying for them, thereby imposing debts on the third world which are still being paid off.

The third reason for the failure of the Stalinist model was the bureaucratic elite centred on the control of one man—Stalin—and the central committee. But that merely mirrored what happens in the west—a few people control these organisations. At any rate, these factors led to enervation on the part of the workers and the failure of the model.

Neither model let in the workers or the consumers; it did not let in the public or any elements of democracy. That is what must change in our industry. Privatisation will certainly not bring about that change. It is, as Harold Macmillan said, like selling off the family silver. I remember a councillor shouting across the council chamber that privatisation was like eating the seedcorn and that we would reap the consequences in the future.

Thames Water has announced profits of about £220 million, and that is all to the good. The company has been built up by the high bills charged to the public in the past. Those profits will be siphoned off to a few shareholders. When Thames Water announced its profits, it also announced another price rise of 15 per cent., which is well above inflation. That shows how privatisation works.

The public transport system outside London has been deregulated and privatised, and that dreadful prospect looms for London. There are 16 per cent. fewer buses and a worse service is being provided, certainly at off-peak times and in unprofitable areas. When the Government end all public service provision, especially in transport, the travel card and the old-age pensioners' card will disappear because matters will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which will say that such benefits are a restriction of trade. Unprofitable routes will be closed and people will have to pay higher fares and accept lower standards. Those things are already happening outside London.

My third example relates to the national health service. The formation of NHS trusts is the first of a two-stage process of privatising the national health service. The so-called provider, the trust, can require the GP and the district health authority to buy service contracts. Eventually, the trusts will lead to people having to pay for the health service.

Cleaners in the health service received low pay and did a terrific job, but when the Government privatised that service, the contractors put those cleaners out of work and employed people on even lower pay. The result has been dirtier hospitals. Those are three examples of how privatisation is bad. It leads to the sort of asset stripping of which Harold Macmillan spoke. The public services cannot be left to the market, because the market is interested only in profit. The result is much more public squalor and severe damage to the environment. The Government have run down the public services in preparation for privatisation, and such a policy shifts the burden to people and makes them pay more.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend says that public services cannot work if they are privatised. He also spoke about the national health service and the fact that a Tory said that he did not believe in privatisation and financial incentives in the NHS. Another Tory Member said that she was in favour of privatising it. My hon. Friend would do well to emphasise that, if the Tories are returned to power, the majority of Tory Members who believe in privatising the health service would win the day and would also privatise social security benefits. That is what they would be up to if they got a chance. Thank God they will not get it.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend makes an effective point. Privatisation of the NHS would result in more and more people paying for their treatment.

The market is chaotic and unplanned. It is also harsh and grossly unfair and, as we see, that causes many companies to go bust. The result is vast wealth for fewer and fewer people, and mostly undeserving people at that. For others—the majority—there is rising unemployment and poverty. The process contributes to environmental devastation if it is allowed to continue unchecked.

In reality, we are talking about class and the preservation of inherited wealth. Most of the ancestors of the members of the powerful class elite were robber barons. They either obtained their wealth by robbing or they engaged in a huge programme of exploitation, including the exploitation of workers. Most wealth is passed on from one generation to another, and those who control that wealth now have done nothing to earn it.

I accept that there are a few self-made people who have created great wealth in a lifetime, but I would be critical of half of those who come within that category. Many of them are speculators, especially in finance capital. They are making money out of money. Only a few have gained their wealth from production that benefits the country.

Privatisation furthers the unmerited class elite. Some of those who have the money to buy out the nation's assets sell them on to foreign capitalists so that they can enjoy the high life here. The system must not continue if we are to maintain living standards. It must not be maintained because of its impact on the world environment.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has talked about shareholders. It is an interesting fact that 15 years ago, private individuals owned 30 per cent. of all shares. Despite all the privatisation measures and the so-called spread of wealth through share ownership, private individuals now own only 20 per cent. of shares. The Government have certainly spread some wealth.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend has made the point well. Most of those who bought shares in privatised industries could see that the Government were engaged in a great rip-off. They said to themselves, justifiably, "Why shouldn't we get some of it?" They bought shares and then took their profit. The shares went back to the large corporations. Privatisation has not led to the spread of wealth.

The competitive system must not be maintained, because of the threat that it presents to the world's environment. It leads to pollution and threatens other countries. There is competition on a huge scale between countries when there is a recession, and that can lead to war. When third-world countries say, "We shall not put up with this any longer," that sometimes leads to war in the long term. That is where the private market system will take us. There is every danger that it will take nations into war.

Against that background, it is reasonable for the public to take control and to take some of the profits that are made, so that the moneys can be reinvested to create jobs. We must plan for the future, change direction and invest in worthwhile production. Control is a political concept. It must not rest with one man or a central committee.

Mr. Skinner: Or one woman.

Mr. Cohen: Yes—or one woman. Control needs to be decentralised or democratised. It should be extended to lower levels of accountability.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend initially failed to mention women, but he recovered in time. We have just had nearly 12 years of a woman Prime Minister. Some Tory Members are so disgusted with the present Prime Minister's failure to run the show that they are forming a group to bring back the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) as Prime Minister—as happened with De Gaulle. They are arguing about what to call the group. I think that the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is in the group, as well as Alan Walters, Pinochet and De Klerk. They are having a row about the name. One faction wants to call it "the rottweilers", and another faction says that it should be called "Save Her In Time".

Mr. Cohen: I do not know about rottweilers, but if the Tory party gets back into power, the country will certainly go to the dogs.

We need decentralisation and democratisation at a much lower level to provide greater accountability, with only a strategic overview at the centre. Small businesses would be virtually unfettered; certainly less fettered than they are now. They would probably pay less tax, too. Such a model would mean the break-up of most of the large corporations, especially the monopolies, which run much of our industry at present.

The finance capital should also be democratised. The banks should be taken into public ownership and be subject to public control. A Labour Government would need to do that to prevent betrayal by the people who run those banks, who would export capital to undermine a Labour Government. They have done that before and a Labour Government would have to place the banks under public control to prevent that from happening again.

Mr. Tebbit: Among his examples of privatisation, will the hon. Gentleman be referring to the way in which Hackney borough council's housing stock seems to have been privatised? It could be called an "employee steal-out". The practice seems to be prevalent in Labour-controlled authorities. Does the hon. Gentleman have a Stalinist way of preventing that from happening in the future?

Mr. Cohen: That is an engaging point, but I am disappointed because I was referring to the banks and I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was going to ask abut the privatisation of banks. The Midland bank had such bad debts that it should have gone broke, but it was bailed out by the Government, and the taxpayer had to pay huge amounts. Whenever financial institutions have had atrocious results because of bad deals and huge debts, the Government have helped them out.

Mr. Skinner: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the past three years, more than £4,000 million of taxpayers' money has gone to the top four clearing banks—Midland, Lloyds, National Westminster and Barclays? They were up to their necks in debt—mainly overseas debt—and rather than write off the debts of third-world countries, the Government wrote off the debts of their friends in the banks, yet they have the cheek to talk about intervention in the public sector.

Mr. Cohen: The Government do not have the courage of their convictions; they are not prepared to apply their views on privatisation to the banks. Several of those banks would have gone broke, and the Government know that. It would have been better to bring them into public control, because public money has baled them out.

Big business should be democratised so that the workers and the consumers are more involved. Democracy is distorted when vast sums are available to finance the Conservative party. The Tories also virtually control the media in this country.

The big corporations must be decentralised and democratised in the interests of democracy. There are dreadful problems with the markets: that is clear from the level of unemployment in eastern Europe and in this country. I believe that public ownership and public control will always have a role to play in democratic socialism.

1.49 pm

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): From the point of view of the Labour party, this debate has fallen apart in the past few minutes. Until a few moments ago this was a suave debate with the respectable and respected hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) responding on behalf of the Opposition. It seemed that other Opposition Members had been advised to stay away so as to downgrade the debate, but it seems that the cat has got out of the bag and that strategy has fallen apart.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has just announced a new tenet of Labour party policy. He said that the banks should be nationalised. No doubt everyone with a bank account will have noted that statement. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has just entered the debate rather late in the day, but he is more representative of the real Labour party.

I have a horrific scenario to describe. Let us suppose that there was a Labour Government. Would the Labour Government Benches be empty if the House was discussing nationalisation? They would not. They would be full of Labour Members egging the Labour Government on to nationalise more, to intervene more, and to create what we have already been told Labour would create—a national investment bank into which to pump taxpayers' money to invest in various companies, most of which are making losses. The hon. Member for Bolsover will recall how, under a Labour Government, the National Enterprise Board threw money away. Money was taken from successful industries and thrown away through idiotic investments. Today we have seen the real face of the Labour party. A Labour Government would be egged on towards more interference and nationalisation.

I wish to reinforce the point about interference. If a Government—whether Labour or Conservative—owned an industry, they would be tempted to intervene. That is not my imagination—it is the reality. I have great respect for my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, but if he were a Minister in charge of a nationalised industry, even he—one of the most robust Members of the House—would be tempted to intervene.

For example, if British Steel had a plant in a constituency in which there was to be a by-election the outcome of which was uncertain, a Minister might be leaned on and told not to make a fuss just before that by-election. Similarly, if a general election were imminent, he might be told to keep things quiet and under wraps. Such things have happened under Labour and Conservative Governments.

That practice is not restricted to Ministers. Sir Ian MacGregor ran British Steel and British Coal. He used to say that decisions were taken in the boardrooms of those concerns, but as soon as they were taken they were leaked via civil servants to the Ministry. Politicians would then contact Sir Ian MacGregor and question his actions. A business cannot be run if people are plugged in at all levels trying to second-guess every decision. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) said, politicians are not the right people to make such decisions.

The great lesson and rationale for privatising industry is to remove it from state control and from the interference of politicians and civil servants. History shows that we have been bad business owners. We interfered and we neglected investment. Bearing in mind the investment in British Telecom, the water industry or British Steel, who can honestly believe that such investment would be allowed if there were a greater demand, which for political reasons there would be, for investment in schools and hospitals? Schools and hospitals are of deep concern to politicians because they affect votes. They would come first and investment in those industries would come second. We were thoroughly bad owners for two reasons: interference and the neglect of investment.

The investment successes of those industries, which the Labour party cannot realistically deny unless it wants to close its mind to them, have put them on their feet. The British Telecom service, which has been improved, is very exciting and relevant to the customer. What also excites me enormously is that new markets have been opened. Opportunities for new companies have been made. Those companies would never have been able to come into the market before privatisation and certainly not before the monopolies position was broken up. There have been massive opportunities for new businesses. Most of those businesses were very small and they have been able to enter a market that was previously closed to them. One of the great lessons is that we must not go back down the nationalisation route, but if the Labour party were ever in power again, that is precisely what would happen.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford said with great pride that he had worked for British Airways for 17 years. Having seen it become the most successful and profitable airline in the world, we really must not say, "It is rather embarrassing that it is making so much profit." We should be proud that it is profitable. If companies are profitable, they will be able to afford to make investments to make sure that they remain profitable and serve the public in the most effective way possible. One almost sees the old Adam coming back into the political world. Having privatised companies and allowed them to become successful, we must not succumb to the temptation to attack them for that very success. Politicians can all too easily do that, and I beg hon. Members not to do so.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Grylls: My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is getting agitated. I wish to speak only briefly.

The sad thing is that if those industries were taken back into control, whether or not a percentage point above or below 51 per cent., and if a Government started to

[Mr. Grylls]

interfere, high-flying and successful managers who have been attracted into those industries would fly out the window and go to work in an industry that would not be interfered with by government. That would be the stupidest thing that any Government could do. In earlier decades, we did not have many successful businesses, but we can now tick off a whole list. Reference has been made to the 44 that have been privatised, including British Steel, British Airways and British Telecom. Those three companies, together with Cable and Wireless and Amersham International are world-leading companies.

Mr. Oppenheim: And British Aerospace.

Mr. Grylls: As my hon. Friend rightly reminds me, we must include British Aerospace. Those companies are the most successful in the world. Let us take pride in them. The most effective thing to do is to try not to undermine them. That is the danger of a Labour Government, because that is the route that they would take. Our greatest service must be to ensure that we remain in government and keep sanity in our policies so that successful industries can continue to be successful and go from success to success for the good of those who work in them as well as for the good of the consumers whom they serve.

1.59 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is a hard act to follow, because he was prepared to admit only that there were some minor difficulties with the nationalised industries when they were run by the Labour Government. He said that the problems that were experienced by the socialist economies of eastern Europe were due to the little matter of the cult of Stalinism. If he is prepared to say that, he will believe anything. It is astonishing that some Labour Members still hold views that would more appropriately have been heard in the House in the 1940s.

One of the interesting things about our Friday debates is that only hon. Members who are really interested bother to turn up. It is remarkable that the Labour Benches have been practically empty today. As three hon. Members representing Essex are present—myself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris)—at times there have been more Essex Conservative Members present than Labour Members in total.

It is surprising that those who believe the same as the hon. Member for Leyton do not beat a path to the wonderful socialist economies of eastern Europe where they could live under such a wonderful regime. I can think of only three people who went there—Burgess, Maclean and Philby—all of whom were socialists in their own way and, as I understand it, mostly regretted it once they got there. Apart from them, I have not heard of any socialists beating a path to the socialist economies, although we hear every day about the great pressure of socialists who are trying to escape from their socialist economies to live and work in this country where we have the benefits of free enterprise and a mixed economy. We have managed to make most of our major nationalised industries successful again by taking them out of the public sector and putting them back into the hands of private management.

Labour's performance today has been remarkable. The Labour party is busy doing an Oxfam, taking our old clothes and belatedly adopting most of our old policies, such as selling off council houses. However, Opposition Members have not put in a showing today such as would let the British public know how strongly they feel about economic matters. Perhaps they are all in Liverpool, Walton trying to persuade the true face of the Labour party not to show itself at the coming by-election. The real reason for their absence, however, is probably that the Labour party sees itself as the representative of organised labour and of the work force in industry. It is entirely in the pay of trade unions. I do not know what Labour Members believe in their heart of hearts, but I am not sure that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) really believed in what he was talking about. At one stage, I thought that we might get a convert—most of the best converts to capitalism come from the left—and that he was about to admit that he was trying to defend an absolutely hopeless case.

The Labour party does not understand how business works, because few Labour Members have tried to run a business or to understand how businesses get information. A business's profits are one of its most important sources of information. A business that is not making a profit does not know what its customers want. If it is making a loss, it knows that what it is doing is not profitable and is not what the public want. That information was denied to the public all the time that the state ran our major industries because when they made massive losses, the taxpayer was squeezed to make good those losses. Through its profitability, therefore, Britain's smallish private sector had constantly to prop up the awful nationalised industries that were brought in after the war and which were making massive losses. It is to the great credit of private management and its profits that Britain could maintain that ramshackle system for so long.

The great British public, whom we are here to represent, do not give a stuff about who is running an industry. They care about the service that they get from the industry and the choice, variety and value for money offered to them. That is the interface between Joe Public and those who provide the goods and services.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had a little crack at me by suggesting that I was the only Conservative Member who was prepared to admit that the private sector has a great deal to offer the public welfare industries. That is true. I am solid on that. I do not believe that public services, such as the health service, must be run by public boards. They can be much more effective through the introduction of elements of subcontracting and competition. That is precisely what the Government are doing in not only health but education. I hope that in the not-too-distant future we shall apply those principles to other aspects of the welfare services, because wherever they have applied they have been marvellously successful.

The benefits of taking industries back into the private sector are so manifold that it is almost impossible to have time to talk about them all. Throughout my time as a schoolteacher and later in business, we suffered the misery of schools having to close because we had no heat because one of the nationalised producers of oil, gas, coal or electricity was on strike. Sometimes schools had to be closed because there was no public transport as a result of strikes.

The legacy of nationalisation, under which industries were run in the interests of trade unionism, was that the public received no service whatever. I remember the great shortages. We had a shortage of toilet rolls as a result of strikes in the docks. No toilet rolls could be imported. People would sneak over to the continent with lorries and bring them back full of toilet rolls.

We had to queue for cars. One would put one's name down and three years later the nationalised car industry British Leyland allocated one a car if one was lucky, by which time the car was so valuable that no one did not buy it. Most people then sold it at 300 per cent. profit. Most people ran miserable worn-out cars, just as people do in eastern Europe today. That is what passed in those days for competition in the car industry. That is what people put up with as a result of the nationalised state car industry. It is almost impossible to believe what circumstances were in our lifetime.

One benefit of denationalisation has been an absence of queues and of shortages of basic products, commodities and services for which people in eastern Europe still queue but which in Britain we take for granted as being in abundance. Sometimes we even criticise the private sector because we have too much variety rather than too little.

We now have far more jobs. The industries that we have taken out of nationalisation were previously full of feather-bedded jobs and overmanning. They have now provided more than 1 million new, real jobs in a competitive market where people have a great prospect of increasing their job opportunities. Previously people were simply standing still because the state was keeping them in a job that did not really exist.

We now have lower taxes than previously because we do not have to bale out industries with the billions of pounds which we paid out in subsidies, not yearly but weekly. The change in attitude to those industries means that we, the British taxpayers, pay far less tax to central Government. We now have more shareholders in Britain than ever before.

Mr. Skinner: We have not.

Mrs. Gorman: We have less interference. We have the incentive of better management. The hon. Member for Bolsover intervenes from a sedentary position. He knows perfectly well that the great majority of shares in our denationalised industries are now held by pension funds in which everyone of us who has a private pension to look forward to when we retire is a shareholder.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have been waiting all morning to make my speech.

The best thing that we now have in the denationalised industries has been mentioned a great deal this morning. It is choice. British Telecom has been referred to time and again, but there are many other examples. The benefits are absolutely undoubted. I doubt whether even the hon. Member for Leyton could deny those benefits. We must maintain the momentum of those choices that we have introduced.

We may have privatised 44 companies, but there are many more to go. We need to put the Post Office into the private sector and have more competition in the provision of its services. We need to introduce new private companies to deliver letters. Why not? We know that such a service would work, so let us provide one.

Every spring, people queue up at the Passport Office and the state keeps them waiting three or four months for their passports. Honeymooners are now unable to holiday abroad because they are unable to receive a passport on time. We could do away with all those problems by privatisation.

We need a lot more privatisation in local government. We should not forget when we speak of the remnants of socialism in eastern Europe that they also exist in Liverpool. Toxteth is as good an example of the eastern European experience as anything that one could wish to see on the other side of what used to be called the iron curtain.

We need more privatisation in the prison service. The Government have begun that experiment and I am pleased. Given the problems that we have experienced with social workers, we could do with a bit of privatisation there and the introduction of more outside consultants. In education, schools are increasingly under the management of parents and boards of governors. For my money, that is as good as privatisation, because parents and governors will have a say on how things are run and the Government will not be dictating from the centre.

We need much more private money and private enterprise in housing. In my experience as a councillor in the inner city, housing in the state sector is almost universally disliked. People want public-sector housing to be transferred to the private sector. We should transfer responsibility for housing from the state sector. Whether that is achieved through private landlord management, as under the opt-out scheme offered to council estates, or however, we should have more private sector involvement.

Most of all, I put it to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that we should apply the doctrines and philosophy of privatisation to the money markets. If there are problems in this country—I do not deny that there are—they relate to money management and interest rates. Part of the reason for that is that we do not yet apply the denationalisation principle to the money markets. I suggest to the Government—I do not believe that all the errors have been made by the Opposition, although they are responsible for 99 per cent. of them—that we have yet to apply our vote-winning philosophy to that sector through the privatisation and denationalisation of banks, especially the central banks.

The countries with the greatest amount of privatisation and decentralisation and the most independent banking structure have the greatest stability in terms of inflation, the creation of jobs and interest rates. My only criticism of the Government is that they are not moving fast enough on denationalisation.

If the Labour party's performance today is a guide, heaven help this country if it embarks on a renationalisation programme. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) said, behind those on the Labour Benches would be the trade union paymasters. They would force the Labour party to return power to those who, in the past, showed themselves absolutely unworthy of it and totally indifferent to the real needs and desires of consumers.

2.13 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Anyone would imagine——

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be well aware that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) characteristically poses as a great parliamentarian and a diligent attender of debates. Is it therefore in order for me to point out that he has not been here for the bulk of the debate? He strolled in at about 1 o'clock after a long lie-in this morning and a cup of coffee in the Tea Room. Now he is seeking to speak. Do you think that that shows diligence, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I hope that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), with his usual sense of fairness, will allow time for another contribution before the end of the debate.

Mr. Skinner: I was here as early as any other hon. Member. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) made his speech and waltzed off, but I have not heard Tory Members complaining about his attitude. Several others have waltzed in, spoken and cleared off. Frankly, I see no difference between my having a chance to speak and certain Privy Councillors coming in, saying their bit and slinging their hook.

From the contributions of Conservative Members today, one might have the impression that Labour was at the bottom of the poll and the Tories at the top. This is a Government day, so the Tories could choose any subject for debate. Yet they chose a subject which the public at large could do without having discussed when there are scores of things that we ought to be discussing. Labour Members would be here in force had the Government not selected for debate a subject which, considering all the problems that the nation faces, is inconsequential in the extreme. Every Business Question Time the Leader of the House is asked by perhaps 20 Members on each side to try to find time to discuss certain items in the coming week, and he invariably replies, in effect, "Sorry, we don't have the time."

Anyone would imagine, after the words of praise that the Tories have heaped on the concept of privatisation, that it had led them to a glorious end. *The Daily Telegraph*, a Tory newspaper, having conducted a poll, reveals in this morning's issue that Labour is eight points ahead of the Tories, who have 33·5 per cent. support and that the Liberals have 21 per cent., the Liberals no doubt picking up votes in some strong Tory areas. Translated into general election results, Labour would have a majority of 80 or 90.4

As I say, one would imagine, listening to Tory Members, that privatisation had brought about a change in the political scene beneficial to them. After 12 years, the people are fed up with privatisation. Many of those who bought shares have sold them, so the 30 per cent. or so of shares in privatised companies that were held by private individuals is now down to about 20 per cent. The shares have gone abroad, into pension funds, or been bought by other institutions.

What has happened to the great capital-owning democracy we used to hear about? The Tories have privatised the relatively easy bits and now have to deal with the difficult parts. That was made clear when they finally succeeded in privatising the rain—the water industry—when the public realised that the Tories had gone too far. The people did not like the idea of water being privatised, and they were right, as their quarterly or half-yearly bills are proving.

The executives of the water boards have been given large salary increases, but the workers who create the wealth of the nation have had a paltry rise. The public are therefore asking what privatisation has been about, and in view of the huge profits made by British Gas and British Telecom, people are bound to conclude that the privatisation exercise was not for the general public, but for a few people closely wedded to the Tory party.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am pleased to see the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) in his place in view of his references to British Telecom. British Telecom's annual report is published today. What does my hon. Friend think of the fact that its publication has been delayed until three o'clock so that its contents cannot form part of our debate? That is hardly a gesture of confidence.

Mr. Skinner: I imagine that my hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Government have been on the blower to one of their friends in British Telecom to say that they have asked for an embarrassing debate and have shot themselves in the foot and to ask for the report to be held back until the debate is finished. That is almost certainly true.

This debate has shown that the Government have run out of privatisation ideas, with a few exceptions. They have now reached the difficult bits. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who has just left the Chamber —I do not make a fuss about that, but I say it because Tory Members have had a crack at me—favours privatising many more industries, including the national health service. Many Conservative Members want that, but the last thing that they want to do is to tell the public before a general election.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman is obviously proud of the public sector. Is he proud of the fact that the public sector, in the form of Derbyshire county council, has given his brother a well-paid job as a minder for Japanese business men when his brother was sacked by Derbyshire county council, under an earlier regime, for fiddling work sheets? Is the hon. Gentleman proud of such a public sector?

Mr. Skinner: I am in favour of public bodies such as local authorities throughout the country. I expect all Tory Members to be in favour of local authorities, as they have not privatised them yet and I have not heard them talk about doing so. As for the Japanese plant, which the hon. Gentleman supports and I do not—*[Interruption.]* Did the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who is trying to intervene from a sedentary position, support the Toyota plant coming to Derby?

Mr. Oppenheim: Yes, I did.

Mr. Skinner: Right. I did not, and I have nothing to do with that. It is not my business who gets jobs there. The hon. Gentleman likes the Japanese and the fact that they have brought their plant to Derbyshire. That is his business and not a headache for me.

The debate has degenerated into an argument between Tory Members who want to privatise the health service, the social security benefits payment system and now, it

seems, local authorities as well. They do not intend to discuss that before the next general election. If they will not disclose their intentions, perhaps they will say why they have not yet privatised the armed forces. If providing financial incentives is the only way to make things work, why are the Tories not yet talking about privatising the Royal Air Force, the Army, the Navy and the police force? Are those privatisations on the next agenda? Are Tory Members not prepared to tell us?

Privatisation has been a failure. After 12 years of privatisation and monetarism, Britain's manufacturing economy has gone through the floor. In every region there are examples of manufacturing industry being closed every week. I should have thought that after 12 years of monetarism and privatisation far more people would be in work, but more than 2 million people are now out of work, according to the official figures—and it is more likely that if the women, and the half a million young lads and lasses on slave labour schemes were added to the register, the figure would be some 3 million. Here we are with a Government who have practised privatisation and monetarism for 12 years and, according to their figures there are 2 million people out of work—in fact, there are probably about 3 million people actually without a job—and the numbers are rising every week.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman said that after 12 years of this Government's policies we would expect to have more people in work. He will be delighted to know that there are more people in work in Britain today than ever before.

Mr. Skinner: We know that the Government are very handy at massaging the figures. We also know that included among the numbers to which the Minister referred are many people in part-time occupations. There are also plenty of Members of Parliament in part-time occupations—they have moonlighting jobs. While we are on that subject, there are 19 ex-Cabinet Ministers with 59 directorships between them and 250 Tory Members have consultancies, advisorships or directorships. After the next general election, when Labour has won, all the ex-Tory Members will be looking for jobs in all the private companies, and those still with a job will be looking for more directorships. Instead of rabbiting on, the Minister should go through the list of companies in the Confederation of British Industry to see what jobs he can get as a director when he loses his job after the next general election, because that is bound to follow as sure as night follows day.

The Minister might have a row with the right hon. Member for Chingford, who is one of the 19 ex-Cabinet Ministers holding 59 directorships between them. The right hon. Member probably has six already—the Minister should go and ask his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford to give him one because he has been gobbling them up like the other ex-Cabinet Ministers who have taken on jobs.

Mr. Tebbit: It would probably be possible for my hon. Friend the Minister to get a job with Derbyshire county council if he wanted another job at some time. As the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows, there is a printing department in Derbyshire county council which is sometimes grossly overloaded with work. Although it costs the chargepayers of Derbyshire much money, the council has to contract out work from its printing department to the private sector, which costs £50,000 or £100,000 or so. Would not the hon. Member for Bolsover agree that that is a damn fool idea?

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Member for Chingford knows how to print money because he was the Minister responsible for the privatisation of British Telecom. He then became an ex-Cabinet Minister, and one of his first jobs was a non-executive directorship with British Telecom. As a result, he knows how to print money. He is the last person who should talk about Derbyshire county council.

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to say that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) probably wishes he was out collecting money for Councillor Bookbinder's legal fund rather than being in the House?

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Member for Chingford knows how to print money and is the last person who should talk about anyone else, including those at Derbyshire county council. If the auditor had been allowed to give evidence in the libel case in which the right hon. Gentleman has just participated, there is just a possibility—I put it no higher than that—that he might have lost and the other fellow might have won.

Mr. Tebbit: I should have liked the district auditor to give evidence—I should have liked Councillor Bookbinder to give evidence, but unfortunately he would not do so. For the very same reason, there is a junior member of the Labour party's Front Bench team here today. The party's leadership is afraid to put in a senior member, but it can always back down from what a junior member says. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has been good under cross-examination—better than Councillor Bookbinder would have been, I expect.

The hon. Member for Bolsover was right—I do know a thing or two about printing money. At British Telecom, we have effectively been doing so for our customers for the past four years—they have enjoyed reductions in the cost of their telephone bills every year since the company was denationalised. What is more, they have had better value for money and better service. The list is endless. Improvements in the service——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is long enough for an intervention.

Mr. Skinner: I have one thing to say to the right hon. Gentleman, who is a non-executive director of British Telecom. He is earning a big fat fee. BT's profits have gone through the roof. What has he been doing lately while British Telecom's executives and bosses have been awarding themselves massive pay rises? Why has he not been doing a job in the public interest? Why has he not been telling the people around the boardroom table——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Adjournment, please.

Mr. Skinner: Not a bad finish.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

British Rail (Reorganisation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Railways are in the news this week, but when I won this Adjournment debate a fortnight ago, the speech by the Secretary of State for Transport and the relevations of yesterday had not yet occurred. I wish to discuss something at least as fundamental—a major reorganisation of British Rail's management structure.

This reorganisation was referred to in *The Observer* on 19 May 1991 under the headline, "BR managers in open revolt." The article revealed for the first time a proposal by British Rail known as "organising for quality", which represents the dismemberment of the main line railway regions as we know them.

This has caused considerable anxiety both on the railways and among people who are not professional staff but who take an interest in these matters. The proposal implies the break-up of the functional and operational actuality of the main line regions of British Rail in favour of a complex structure based on perceived markets. That is confirmed by British Rail in an article in *Railway Gazette International,* saying:

"Businesses and profit centres based on markets will be responsible for managing nearly all British Rail assets including infrastructure, and for most operating and engineering staff; sharing of assets, including track, is covered by rental agreements."

This is a fundamental change which means that all track, earthworks, civil engineering works, depots, motive-power depots, stations and, presumably, management and control of staff and their promotion will be divided up in a new way. I can see no other interpretation of the statement.

All this is very strange given the sort of railways that we have in Britain. Railways are run differently in the United States and elsewhere, but here, a railway is a complex organism bringing together a wide variety of skills, occupations and experience in order to provide a multiple service to public and industrial clients alike. Efficient operational control on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute basis over the whole route is a central task, around which a successful railway service inevitably revolves. This happens not to be a quotation—it is my summation of what I believe to be good railway practice, but it appears not to be the view of the chief executive of the British Rail Board. He continues in the same article:

"territories covered by the private railway companies that were nationalised in 1948, the Regions evolved into operational units running trains to the order of business sector managers with bottom line commercial responsibility. The logical process of serving distinct markets rather than arbitrary geographical regions is now to be completed by BR's Organising for Quality project. OfQ is far reaching, permeating every corner of the industry. Yet its goal is clear and simple: devolve responsibility and accountability to our component Business Units as far as possible within the constraints imposed by the BR Board's statutory duties",

which are imposed by this House.

Hon. Members will have noted the expression, "arbitrary geographical regions". They are not arbitrary; they are largely the railways as built and subsequently modified with sensible adjustments and interpenetrating linkages. The document says that as far as possible it will be done within the legal constraints that are imposed, not within the constraints imposed by effective and efficient operation. That statement by the chief executive of the British Railways board is quite astonishing.

From the early 1980s, a matrix organisation has evolved that has not been entirely satisfactory, although it had some good points. The brand name "InterCity" led people to expect a certain standard that would be maintained throughout the journey, but that is not always the case. Brand names such as Network SouthEast were satisfactory as long as they did not mean going much further than painting all the coaches in the same colours. Mr. Pullman had that good idea more than a century ago.

As any accountant knows—and the Minister has practical experience of this—running a double set of internal accounts is not only necessary but helpful in improving efficiency. However, that should not be driven to the lengths to which British Rail appears to be driving it. The board says that public support has gone down from 37 to 17 per cent. of revenue in the past 10 years and that the fall is due to that fact. It says that conflicts and difficulties have arisen and that it will push matters to the other extreme. Instead of having regions based on operational actuality and the movement of passengers, it will create seven business units, each of which will be independent and will report loosely to central headquarters. All the assets, including signalling, will be transferred and the operative firms will buy and hire track between themselves.

We heard on Wednesday about this reorganisation by British Rail, and yesterday a map was placed in the Library. It shows the nine business units and about 26 or more profit centres on which the whole organisation will be based. Performance and, no doubt, promotion will be centred on those profit centres. The map is not much use because it shows only InterCity. Yesterday I showed it to an hon. Member who said, "Where is my station? Oh, my line is not even there."

The note on the map states that as well as the Network SouthEast divisions, of which there are nine, and the regions, it shows the whole route network over which InterCity will operate, including some track sections and facilities of other businesses. The note states that it is beyond the scope of the map to indicate such detail.

The fact that InterCity will own some lines and rent others is not a matter of detail. The seven organisations are InterCity, which will have some track of its own and hire the rest, and will have five profit centres; Regional Railways, which will consist of ScotRail, north-west region, north-east region, central region, south Wales and west region; Network SouthEast, which will have nine divisions each based upon—surprise, surprise—the old main lines out of London. There will be a European passenger division, Train Load Freight division with four profit centres, and Rail Freight Distribution, which we know better under its brand name of Freightliner, which will have two divisions, United Kingdom and Europe. There will also be a Telecommunications division and a Parcels division, the latter being jointly owned by all the operating divisions.

Southern region disappeared on 1 April and the other regions will disappear over the next year. That is the only part of the plan with which I can agree, because the three southern divisions of Network SouthEast follow the three divisions of the old southern region—eastern, central, and western—which is common sense. For the rest, there are all sorts of problems. What about Euston, St. Pancras and

King's Cross? Who will own the track from those stations to the Network SouthEast boundary? If it is one or the other, what will happen when there are delays? Who will control the signal box? We shall be back to Victorian times, when there were shenanigans between the private railways companies, lawsuits and all sorts of things.

I shall give an example of the extent to which the process has already gone. About a year ago I was on a train that broke down at Ilford. It was an electric train of the sort that are always breaking down between Liverpool street and Norwich. In the siding was a diesel locomotive. I thought, "They will get that out." Railfreight was painted on it. I said to the railman, "Let's have that." He replied, "No, sir. We would have to hire that."

I understand that at Peterborough recently an InterCity train had to use a loop line which is already allocated to Network SouthEast. I understand—this is only reportage—that the signal man was told, "Make sure you book that because we can have 46 quid off InterCity for using the line." That may or may not be true, but the crews and the staff understand it to be the position. Nothing has been done to stop such problems arising.

I shall use Stratford to present a more practical example, though the Peterborough example was practical enough. I represent part of the London borough of Newham where the Great Eastern railway was born and where the hub of its operations was located. It is the densest suburban railway network north of the Thames:There is Liverpool Street, with its network of former Great Eastern lines, which is divided into two. There is Great Eastern and a new animal called West Anglia, which is the route to travel to Cambridge, and probably to King's Lynn. As I have said, the map is not especially clear. It is probable that Stratford will be operated by Network SouthEast, Eastern, which would make sense. However, it becomes Regional Railways beyond Manningtree.

InterCity trains will go through Stratford. Trainload Freight will be coming out of the Ford company on the Thames estuary, an area in which there is a great deal of industry. There will be oil trains, for example. So we have three firms competing for lines from Stratford already.

There is also Railfreight, which has a lot of trains coming out of Tilbury, and perhaps from the channel tunnel. That is firm No. 4. Surprise surprise, the north London link is run—quite sensibly up to a point—by Network SouthEast, north. Its trains run out from Willesden, but underneath. That is firm No. 5. We have plans for Crossrail. They are good plans, which the Metropolitan railway produced 100 years ago. That will come from Network SouthEast, Thames and Chiltern division. That is firm No. 6.

We must not forget the docklands light railway and the Central line of London Underground, which currently co-operates with British Rail.

We have six firms that are all competing, all of which have profit centres, I suppose, and controllers. Railway operation is not especially well known to the general public although it receives a lot of hobby interest. It is, however, familiar to many through the remarkable books of the Rev. Awdry. When chaos and human nature ran amuck, the fat controller sorted everything out. That illustrates precisely the importance of a centralised railway operation over a certain route and a certain network.

We do not have a fat controller at Stratford. Instead, we shall have six thin controllers, all be hungry for profits and promotion from the six businesses, each of which will be trying to find its little bit of track. I have no doubt that Network SouthEast, being in a strong position, will screw them all down hard. This is private enterprise. That is the way that we get efficiency, or do we?

I would not wish to joke about safety. As I have said, letters have been sent privately to the chairman of the British Railways Board and others which have found their way into *The Observer*. One of them was from Mr. Peter Rayner, who should not be confused with his namesake, David Rayner. In a 44-page memorandum Mr. Rayner says:

> "The present organisation has evolved over 150 years, and it has its problems, but when safety is threatened the hierachy of Area Manager, Regional Operations Manager, Area Engineer, Regional Engineer and General Manager becomes a professional protective team that would pass any Safety Validation Panel, because traditional systems, knowledge and experience apply, and transcends business decision making."

Irrespective of safety, a team effort is involved, giving the results of a team corporate railway.

Mr. Rayner went on:

> "To destroy these traditional values for no obvious reason other than to make financial management easier is not a big enough prize. Again it appears to compromise the key role of running a safe railway and contradicts Hidden 50."

That refers to the 50th recommendation of the Hidden report on the Clapham disaster, which reads:

> "BR shall ensure that the organisational framework exists to prevent commercial considerations of a business-led railway from compromising safety."

I have heard about some of the details of the new organisation and I know that there are audit boards, officers and surveillance. Safety will be affected if morale is lowered and team effort is destroyed because people believe that, rather than working together, they are allocated to an organisation which is in competition with another.

In the Secretary of State's recent statement, only one approach was new. The other matters to which he referred appear to be happening now to some degree. He made a remarkable statement about BR's monopoly. I thought that the problem with BR—and with most railways in western Europe—was that it has no monopoly—the Government have to do something about that—to solve our traffic problems and to deal with green issues. Is the Secretary of State suggesting that, in future, in addition to those nine businesses others will be using the 14 track authorities which also run trains through the 14 sub-businesses? I suspect that that is what he has in mind.

Why did it take so long to receive a summary of these proposals, which I asked for on 23 May—I received a courteous reply from the Minister—when it was written up by Mr. Welsby in the April issue of *Railway Gazette International*? I do not know whether that publication is read at the Department of Transport, but the information should not have taken so long to reach me.

Thirdly, were the far-reaching plans approved by the Government? Was BR asked to provide such an organisation or did it suggest it itself? Fourthly, bearing in mind the recommendation of the Hidden report, to which I have just referred, was the railway inspectorate asked to assess the safety implications of the new commercial structure for the railways? If so, what were they and will they be published? If not, will the Minister consider referring the structure to the inspectorate for its comments?

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Railways were invented in this country. We have an emotional attachment to them and interest in them coupled with a fairly widespread ignorance of the complexities of their operation. Since the death of Mr. Huskisson when the Rocket was being tested, Parliament has had a responsibility for these matters. I know that the Minister shares my view and understands the relative importance of accounts and humanity. I hope that he will consider these matters with the utmost seriousness.

2.48 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is an expert on transportation matters, particularly railways. Not meaning to be critical of the hon. Gentleman, I must say that, when he speaks about the provision of transportation in London, I associate his thinking but not his age with Herbert Morrison. Right after the war—and indeed before the war—there was much to be said for corporate, public sector or state provision and planning of railway services. However, the Government believe strongly that times have changed.

There is a basic difference of approach and of philosophy between the Government and the hon. Member for Newham, South and many of his Opposition colleagues. That is reflected in the approach of some—but not all—members of British Rail management. That view is that the best services are provided as a result of judgments by rail professionals of what is needed for the corporate good. In other words, what is corporately good for British Rail must, by definition, be good for the passenger. I understand that approach: it has been deeply embedded in the attitudes of some parts of British Rail's management for many years.

The previous chairman, Sir Robert Reid—not to be confused with Bob Reid, the present chairman of British Rail—introduced almost nine years ago the first steps towards reorganising British Rail's internal management to encourage greater accountability and greater management orientation towards the market and what the passenger wanted. The organisation was intended to be more responsive to the passenger.

As the hon. Member for Newham, South is aware, that reorganisation in the 1980s resulted in a rather complex matrix. Those responsible for what were called the businesses sectors—InterCity, Network SouthEast, freight and what were known as provincial railways, but are now known as Regional Railways—were responsible for marketing and pricing decisions that were quite separate from the business management. There was a system of regional or area railway management and also functional management involving the engineers, accountants and others.

The Government have been kept fully informed of British Rail's plans, and we support their thrust. British Rail wants to simplify that matrix so that, within each business sector which the hon. Member for Newham, South identified, the financial responsibility for marketing, pricing and advertising is brought together with the operational responsibility and the safe provision of services.

It must be a tenet of every good and well-organised business that it should bring together responsibility for the provision of services with the responsibility for the interface with the passenger; that involves the quality of service, the pricing of that service and its frequency. That is what the reorganisation is all about.

The hon. Member for Newham, South asked me four main questions. I shall try to respond to them, but if I cannot cover all the points I will read the *Official Report* and write to him. He asked why it has taken so long to deposit the relevant papers in the Library. I can only apologise. There has been no attempt by the Government or by British Rail to be secretive about "Organising for Quality." A document in the Library now contains a summary of the proposal, and the hon. Gentleman has clearly read it. There has been no attempt to cast a veil of secrecy over the proposals. As the hon. Gentleman has admitted, the senior management of British Rail have explained the proposals patiently and clearly, and I welcome that.

The hon. Member also asked about access. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport re-emphasised a few days ago the Government's commitment to move as much freight as possible off the roads and on to rail. I know that the hon. Gentleman supports that notion, and he outlined changes in section 8 grant procedures to encourage that process.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about access to the existing rail network, my right hon. and learned Friend directed his remarks primarily to freight, and indicated the Government's desire to permit other companies to have a right of access to a British Rail track. Clearly, to provide a statutory right, we would require new legislation. There is already much voluntary co-operation between British Rail and private sector freight operators. We greatly welcome the joint venture with Charter Rail—the Foster-Yeoman haulage of aggregate from the west country to London, with British Rail drivers but privately owned wagons. We wish to encourage that.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that, in addition to the concept of the privatisation of British Rail, there was in parallel with that and related to it the right of other operators—properly regulated, of course—to use the rail track of British Rail, and indeed the rail track of others. Perhaps in future, others apart from a privatised British Rail will construct new rail track in this country—obviously, subject to appropriate regulation. There must be a mechanism by which railway operators can travel over that track.

The "Organising for Quality" initiative is rooted in the reforms that were begun nine years ago. The proposals simplify the management matrix. I strongly believe that that is a logical development of the earlier proposals. It was British Rail's idea. It was not suggested by the Government and not forced upon British Rail. The reorganisation, welcome though it is, is in no way consistent with ideas that the Government may or may not have for privatisation, and neither is it inconsistent. Our approach to privatisation is a wholly separate exercise and it is not directly related either to the earlier reforms or the later reforms.

The hon. Gentleman touched on safety, a crucial matter. British Rail believes that the reorganisation is consistent with Hidden recommendation No. 50. The hon. Gentleman and I may need to correspond on that matter further. There is in place a process of safety validation at each stage of the reorganisation to make sure that, before

it is introduced, it is not only consistent with the high standards that British Rail has set itself for safety but in no way confounds or complicates those standards.

For each profit centre—each business sector—there is to be a safety manager. The hon. Gentleman must concede that in the present system—the reorganisation is not complete—safety responsibilities were placed not only on different levels of responsibility but on different individuals. That is not to say that British Rail is not a safe railway on which to travel. The reorganisation places specific responsibility upon a safety manager for a particular sector of operation.

The headquarters of British Rail will set national safety standards and ensure that they are in place throughout not only British Rail's operations but any private operation that is permitted voluntarily to run on British Rail track at the moment. As and when there is deregulation and access is permitted to other operators to run on railway track, those safety standards will apply to all.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Government's position. I hope that I have explained that it is a British Rail plan. We welcome it, but the details are for British Rail. However, we support the thrust of the plan. The hon. Gentleman held up a newspaper article—I believe it was from *The Guardian*. I have travelled widely on British Rail in the 12 months in which I have been a Minister in the Department of Transport. I have found widespread support among the management to whom I have spoken for the thrust of the reforms. That is not to say that there is no dissent or disagreement. There is bound to be dissent and disagreement. It is an open organisation, and senior management, with the wisdom of their experience of 30 or 40 years, should be allowed to express their opinions. I find support and enthusiasm for a reform that gives management greater accountability. It will be a simple system.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about dual control of track running out of London termini. That will not happen. It is not envisaged that InterCity track and Network SouthEast track run in parallel but under different ownership and control. That would be a recipe for chaos.

We welcome the report. The hon. Gentleman and I share great admiration for what British Rail has done. It brought me back from my constituency in time for the debate—from Kettering to St. Pancras, on time. It was a safe, reliable, well-priced and excellent journey. The hon. Gentleman and I want that to apply to all railway journeys.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 10 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

North Wales Hospital

1. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further proposals to replace jobs lost on the closure of the North Wales hospital, Denbigh.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): No final decision has been made about the closure of the North Wales hospital at Denbigh.

Mr. Jones: I was given to understand that the time scale had shortened dramatically for the closure of the hospital. In the light of that, and in the light of the overall recession and a recent statement by the chairman of the Wales tourist board that 95,000 jobs are likely to go in the tourist industry, which is a majority alternative source of employment for those who will lose their jobs at the North Wales hospital, what does the Secretary of State plan to do to replace the jobs that will be lost in a shortened time scale?

Mr. Hunt: There were two aspects to the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question. First, I am glad that I have been able to reassure the hon. Gentleman about the present position regarding the North Wales hospital. Secondly, Denbigh is a designated action area under the Welsh Development Agency's rural prosperity programme and I have announced extra funds for the rural initiative. I hope that we shall see increasing job opportunities in and around the Denbigh area.

Right to Buy

2. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Government's right-to-buy housing policy in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): Our right-to-buy policy has been extremely successful in Wales. During the past 10 years almost 88,000 new town and local authority dwellings have been sold. The percentage of owner-occupation in Wales has risen during that time from 62 to 71 per cent., which is the highest in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mitchell: Given the truly excellent figures that have been provided by my hon. Friend, does he have any other plans to enhance choice and opportunity in the Welsh housing market—for example, by introducing concepts such as flexi-ownership and rents into mortgages? If he has, does he think that the Labour party will oppose those policies and finally reluctantly accept them, just as it did with the right to buy?

Mr. Bennett: As my hon. Friend may be aware, the Development Board for Rural Wales has introduced a flexi-ownership scheme that is centred at Newtown. Already about 3 per cent. of applicants have bought their homes under the new scheme. I believe that it is a worth while development of the right-to-buy scheme for those who do not have the income to be able to buy their houses outright. I only wish that I could share my hon. Friend's confidence that the Opposition believe in the right-to-buy policy. The record of Labour authorities throughout the country does not give one much hope for believing that if there were a Labour Government they would continue the policy.

Mr. Wigley: May I press the Minister on the provisions of the Housing Act 1988, which allow the tenants of council houses to be paid grants under the scheme administered by the Welsh Office to enable them to buy houses in the private sector, thereby allowing council houses to be let to those on the waiting list? As only one such scheme has worked in Wales so far, to the best of my knowledge, will the hon. Gentleman say whether the Welsh Office supports the scheme? Is he optimistic that more authorities will take advantage of it?

Mr. Bennett: We certainly support the scheme and the one to which the hon. Gentleman referred is being evaluated. I hope that as a result of the evaluation we can amend the scheme, if necessary, to ensure that all local authorities in Wales may take part in it.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: According to a parliamentary answer that my hon. Friend gave on Friday, the council with the worst record for processing right-to-buy applications is, I am sorry to say, Cardiff city council, which has control in my constituency. On 31 March, 2,263 applications were outstanding, which was almost 30 per cent. of the all-Wales total. May I encourage my hon. Friend to take any action that will enable me to reassure my constituents that the delay is not the deliberate action of the city council and that it is providing sufficient resources to enable right-to-buy applications to be processed in decent time?

Mr. Bennett: I am concerned that some councils throughout Wales have a large backlog of properties waiting to be processed for sale. If my hon. Friend or any member of the public can refer to an applicant who has waited for an excessively long period to be told that he can purchase his property, I shall be happy to take up the case with the relevant local authority.

Mr. Murphy: As many thousands of families in Wales cannot afford mortgages for private houses, as the Government have almost stopped Welsh councils building new houses and as housing associations cannot cope with the level of demand, is the only advice that the Minister has for a young Welsh couple seeking a home to suggest that they go for flexi-ownership, or whatever he calls it?

Mr. Bennett: No, it is not. In addition to the generous support that we are giving to Tai Cymru in the coming year—I am looking forward to 3,300 properties being built during the year—we have, in the past few days, given

nearly £1 million towards helping authorities bring back into use, for instance, flats above shops and offices. The Welsh Office is promoting a wide range of policies which will be put together in "Housing: Agenda for Action" which I am producing as a personal initiative next month.

NHS Trusts

3. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of applications from those hospitals in Wales which have made approaches to the Welsh Office demonstrating their interest in acquiring trust status.

4. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications and expressions of interest in national health service trust status he has received; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Grist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had for hospitals in Wales to apply for trust status.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To date, only Pembrokeshire district health authority has submitted an expression of interest and made clear its intention to apply to become a trust on 1 April 1992.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Has the Minister—evidently he has not—learnt the lessons of the Monmouth by-election which are that the people of Wales do not want hospitals to opt out and that they do not want market forces introduced into and the creeping privatisation of the health service? Has the Minister thought about those issues? If so, will he put a halt to his programme of hospitals opting out?

Mr. Bennett: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not learnt the lesson of the Monmouth by-election—that one cannot continue to retell untrue stories to the people of Wales. No hospital in Wales may opt out of the national health service. They all remain national health service hospitals, free at the point of delivery and generally paid for out of taxation.

Mr. Rowlands: Generally?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman says "generally", but, of course, NHS hospitals already charge for some services, for example, prescriptions. That has always been the case. The new scheme of national health service trust hospitals will provide greater independence and flexibility for hospitals in Wales and it should be welcomed. I shall welcome any applications for trust status that may be made.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Welsh people should not be frightened by the untruths and lies about national health service trusts which were pumped out during the Monmouth by-election? Does he agree that much of the Opposition's criticism about the trusts has related to the centre of London, which as we all know, is over-provided with hospital facilities and cannot be regarded as a measure for the rest of the country? Inevitably, when the internal market was applied, district health managers realised that they could provide the same services in the local district general hospital without sending their patients to London and they realised that the service could be provided more cheaply, more efficiently and free at the point of delivery in a hospital run by their own staff.

Mr. Bennett: As usual, my hon. Friend puts his finger right on the central point of the argument. It is true that London has special problems as a result of the over-provision of teaching hospitals. I recall that in 1977 the Labour party introduced a reallocation of resources working party to move resources from London to the regions and to hospitals such as those in Wales. I congratulate my hon. Friend on recognising that important point.

Mr. Grist: Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is reported as going round Wales trying to scare electors into misunderstanding the nature of hospital trusts? Does my hon. Friend think either that the hon. Gentleman is plain ignorant of what the trusts involve or that he is grubbing round for the most disreputable sort of electoral support?

Mr. Bennett: I hope that it is the former, but I have my suspicions. The Labour party's attitude is also based on trying to scare people into believing that national health service hospitals will be privatised. It is clear that that is not true. All the hospitals in England that have become NHS trusts are national health service hospitals, free to the patient and paid for out of the generality of taxation.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: In a vast geographical area such as north Wales where there are only three district general hospitals, is not the concept of choice of hospital almost meaningless? As the Government's plans for trusts are based on the claim that they provide a choice for the patient, is not that another example of the Government's flight from reality in Wales? The plans should be abandonded. They are a waste of everybody's time and money.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Patients in north Wales choose between the different hospitals already available—I hope to see an increase in patient movements between different hospitals. They also use hospitals in Cardiff and different regional treatment centres. Patients already go further afield if they want specialist treatment. I want the internal market in the health service to operate as quickly and effectively as possible. If one has such a market, competition, choice and a better quality of service result. That is the lesson that we have learnt from many years of studying free enterprise industries as opposed to nationalised industries.

Mr. Edwards: Will the Minister agree to meet the hospital consultants at Nevill Hall who, last week, expressed their deep anxiety about the whole concept of trust status? They believe that the principles of the NHS are being violated as a result of the policy.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman is simply wrong. I met the consultants of that hospital on 15 May and was able to reassure many of them about the basic principles of the scheme. It is for the health authority and the unit general manager to discuss with and explain to those consultants the principles behind the reforms. If Nevill Hall chooses to take the trust option it will remain an NHS hospital. If the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and

Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) does not understand the difference between what happened under the nationalised industries, which provided poor service——

Mr. Rowlands: Free enterprise is privatisation.

Mr. Bennett: One should study that analogy in terms of the quality of service provided under free enterprise. Within the state-owned NHS I want the same quality of service as that provided by free enterprise companies.

Mr. Michael: Given the nonsense that has been spouted at the Dispatch Box by the Minister, does he accept that the people of Wales are right to be frightened at having him as the Minister responsible for health? If the Minister will not listen to the fair criticism that the Labour party has made of his daft idea of hospital trusts and if he will not accept the truth from us—it has been given to him unstintingly—he should heed the advice offered by the *South Wales Argus*. Before the Monmouth campaign that paper said:

"This thinly-disguised policy of putting cash before patients is already starting to make political waves and we predict that the storm is still brewing."

Does he accept that that storm is still in its early days? Does he accept that that storm and the people's dislike of the opt-out policy, which he is encouraging in Wales, will sweep him and his Government from power?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman continues to try to misrepresent to the people of Wales the reality of the facts. No hospital will opt out of the NHS—it cannot under the Act of Parliament under which NHS trusts were established. The only money that will move around is that attached to the patient. It will be patient demand, supported by that from his doctor, which in future will ensure that we get the best quality of service—not decisions taken by management, as in the past. The money will follow the patient and that is how it should be.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage increase in unemployment in Wales over the last *(a)* six months and *(b)* three months.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures are 24 per cent. and 13 per cent.

Mr. Davies: Those figures prove, if any proof was necessary, the disastrous effect of 12 years of Tory economic policies on Wales.

Mr. David Hunt *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: Instead of shaking his head, will the Secretary of State now admit that the Tory policies of the past 12 years have led not to an economic miracle but to an economic mirage? Does he further agree that those policies have converted and continue to convert Wales from a nation of producers and manufacturers into a candy-floss service economy, ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the 1990s?

Mr. Hunt: It is not often that I accuse the right hon. Gentleman of talking nonsense, but he has just done that. In March 1979, the work force in Wales was 1,140,000. Since then it has risen and the December 1990 figure was 1,194,000. In the past five years the number of long-term unemployed has reduced greatly. A great deal is happening in Wales to the good. Many businesses are reinvesting and we have a record level of inward investment.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the state that the Welsh economy would be in today if it were still dependent on those smokestack industries in which the Opposition are so rootedly entrenched? Is not it a fact that under the stewardship of my right hon. Friend and his predecessors, the Welsh Development Agency and other bodies have brought about the diversification of the Welsh economy, which has enabled it far better to resist the ravages of recession?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend and I am delighted to announce 14 marvellous projects which will be a tremendous boost for Wales. There are to be 14 new industrial projects, creating more than 700 new jobs and involving investment of more than £20 million. They are tangible evidence of the marvellous willingness and confidence of companies to invest in Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: Is not the Secretary of State very well aware of the serious job crisis in the communities that I represent following the closure of Thorn EMI and Hoover —neither of which is a smokestack industry? Is he further aware that we will be increasingly dependent on the development of local business, enterprise and industry? Has he recieved assurances from the major banks that they will be backing the valley businesses and communities both with overdraft facilities and, with the current crisis in interest rates, by passing on the reductions in interest rates during recent months?

Mr. Hunt: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the position in Merthyr. I hope that he will not—he did not do so today—try to say that the Thorn EMI closure is a direct result of the recession, because it is not. Nevertheless, it is a serious blow, with serious job consequences. We shall be doing everything possible to attract new businesses to Merthyr and we shall do our bests to persuade and encourage businesses already there to grow and expand.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about the banks, during recent weeks and months I have met their representatives in Wales and at their head offices in London, where I have put across the message that Wales has a thriving economy, that growth prospects are as marvellous as ever and that we hope to continue to have the banks' full support.

Mr. Barry Jones: Like the Secretary of State, I welcome the developments by Sony, British Airways and Toyota. However, will he admit that the Government neither understand nor care that their economic policies are hurting ordinary people in Wales? Has he forgotten that unemployment in Wales has risen by a quarter during the past six months, yet the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that that is a price worth paying? Indeed, the Secretary of State glibly said that Wales is bucking the trends. That is not good enough and he should admit his responsibility for the recession that is hurting Wales.

Mr. Hunt: We in Wales cannot isolate ourselves from the recession in the United Kingdom, just as the United Kingdom cannot isolate itself from the consequences of recession in many developed countries. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that, as well as announcing major news about jobs today, I have announced 41

projects this year, involving more than £246 million of new investment. I am happy to announce today that the total amount of inward investment in Wales last year and this year has just breached the £1 billion barrier.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Secretary of State note that he should reduce employment in the Welsh Office by sacking those officials who engineered what was, relatively speaking, the theft of the painting of Adelina Patti from Craig-y-nos castle in my constituency? Does not he have a moral duty to return the painting, which was sold to the National Museum of Wales for £9,000? Should not that painting be returned to Craig-y-nos castle, where it has hung for most of this century? The taking of the painting was a disgrace—it was, literally, selling off the family silver.

Mr. Hunt: I am not aware of any situation other than that the painting was properly valued and properly sold.

6. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are doing more than one job and are thus counted more than once in the employment figures.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Precise information on the number of people with more than one job, included in the civilian work force in employment estimates in Wales, is not available. However, the labour force survey estimated that 30,000 people in Wales had a second job in the spring of 1990.

Mr. Flynn: With their new-found interest in veracity, will Ministers note that 750,000 people are counted twice in the employment figures for Britain? Moreover, many millions of people are treated as full-time workers although they are doing part-time work and others, who are unemployed, have been redefined as sick or retired.

Will Ministers leave their Walter Mitty world of manic optimism and come into the real world in Wales every month, where, more and more people are feeling the daily insult of enforced unemployment? When will they hear clearly the message of Monmouth that the Government are clapped out and discredited and that they should go and go quickly?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I should have thought that the people of Wales and all hon. Members would prefer to listen to the excellent news given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a few months ago. He announced that so far this year the Welsh Office had supported 41 projects involving £246 million of new investment which have created nearly 3,700 new jobs and safeguarded well over 600 others. Fourteen projects were announced today. That is very good news for the people of Wales.

With regard to the 30,000 people in Wales who may have a second job, I remind hon. Members that many of us also have two jobs.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister accept that those items of good news, welcome though they are, are dwarfed by the bad news that we regularly receive in our constituencies? In Caerphilly, unemployment has increased by 37 per cent. in the past 12 months. We received a hammer blow when Penallta colliery was closed as a direct result of the Government's policies. At the same time, we are seeing the more insidious seeping away of the employment provided by smaller, localised enterprises. Does not the Minister realise that the real causes of rising unemployment are high interest rates and the Government's disastrous economic policies?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman dwarfs the good news. He talked about the closure of Penallta colliery. Nobody closed more collieries than the previous Labour Government. We had the task of bringing new jobs to Wales and we have done so with energy, vigour and success.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that if a person has two jobs, it does not necessarily mean that he is on low pay, as witnessed by the number of Labour Members who are also lawyers and journalists?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I agree with my hon. Friend, although perhaps I fall into that category myself; as a Member of Parliament and a Minister, I have two jobs. I must tell the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), who asked the original question, that the estimate of 30,000 people in Wales with two jobs must be treated carefully, because it is based on a sample of only 3,000 households and is subject to sampling errors. Of those 30,000, 24,000 were employees, 5,000 were self-employed and 1,000 were on Government training schemes.

Mr. Barry Jones: But still the redundancies rain down on Wales because of the Government's serious economic errors—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is a Front-Bench spokesman and should leave the calling of Back-Bench hon. Members to the Chair rather than trying to interrupt in such a disgraceful manner. He should know better.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) had only just arrived.

Mr. Jones: Will Ministers now acknowledge the seriousness and the depth of the recession in Wales? They repeatedly say, "Do not blame us—we are only the Government, we have no responsibility for the redundancies that keep raining down on the Welsh people." Since the Secretary of State took office, unemployment in Wales has increased dramatically, but neither the Minister nor his right hon. Friend has any strategy to deal with the problem.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Hain. I am sorry—I call Sir Wyn Roberts first.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government have a strategy, as the hon. Gentleman knows only too well. Our task is to bring down inflation, and we are succeeding in that task. We know that bringing down inflation will increase unemployment, but only when we have reduced inflation will the country be able to return to its path of economic growth. We have taken such steps as are necessary to allow the economy to recover and get back on to that path of growth from the end of this year, and our policy is succeeding.

Does the hon. Gentleman support a high rate of inflation? I should not be surprised if he did, because high inflation rates were traditional under Labour Governments, especially the last, when the rate reached 27 per cent.

Mr. Speaker: I now call Mr. Peter Hain.

Mr. Hain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is better to be called twice than not at all.

NHS Trusts

7. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ballot local NHS staff and surrounding communities before proceeding with any further plans for hospitals to be granted trust status.

Mr. David Hunt: I have made it absolutely clear that the local community and staff of a potential NHS trust will be invited to comment during the statutory three-month public consultation on each of the formal applications received.

Mr. Hain: The Secretary of State is dodging the question. Following the disclosure of the fact that his officials are discussing the question of opting out with those responsible for administering Neath, Singleton and Morrison hospitals, does he agree that there are widespread fears about the impact of trust status on patient care and job losses? Will he agree to proper one-person-one-vote ballots of all local residents or, failing that, to proper ballots, through electoral college arrangements, of the community health council, the medical staff, and staff in the hospitals—or is the Welsh Office so wedded to the dogma of the No Turning Back group that it wishes to turn its back on patient care and democratic rights?

Mr. Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to section 4 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, which will show him that we are talking about one health service body becoming another health service body. Trusts are defined as national health service bodies. That is a clear statement of the law—the hon. Gentleman knows that, and it is about time that he recognised it.

I make no apology for the fact that, as Secretary of State for Wales, I have secured record resources for the NHS in Wales, not only in cash terms but in real terms. For every man, woman and child in Wales, £602 is spent, and we are now trying to ensure that the record resources that we have won are concentrated on patient care.

Cataract Surgery, Gwynedd

9. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for the latest available date, the total number of patients that have been treated at the specialist treatment centre for cataract surgery at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor; and if he will separately distinguish by health authority the percentage of those patients whose residence is outside the Gwynedd health authority area.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: At 31 March 1991, a total of 306 patients had received treatment at the ophthalmic treatment centre at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor. The percentage of outside referrals by district health authority were: Mid Glamorgan 2·6 per cent., West Glamorgan 1·0 per cent., Gwent 0·7 per cent., South Glamorgan 0·3 per cent., Powys 2·9 per cent., giving a total of 7·5 per cent.

Mr. Wardell: Will the Minister confirm that on 30 September last year 566 patients were waiting for non-urgent treatment as in-patients in Gwynedd, of whom 89 had been waiting for more than a year? At Singleton hospital in Swansea, the numbers of people who were waiting totalled 1,345 and 476 respectively. Can the Minister tell the House what he and his officials have been doing to demonstrate that it was not an utter sham that only 23 people outside Gwynedd health authority were treated at the all-Wales regional centre for cataract surgery between 1 September 1990 and the end of March this year? What does the Minister have to say about that? What monitoring did his Department undertake? Is that really an all-Wales centre? Is not that situation an absolute scandal?

Mr. Bennett: The original contract with the treatment centre provided for 80 per cent. of patients to come from Gwynedd and 20 per cent. from outside. I am sorry that it has not reached the target of 20 per cent. for patients from outside Gwynedd health authority. Because of the transport arrangements between Bangor and the rest of Wales, I thought it important that we should establish another treatment centre in south Wales, at Bridgend, which will help people in that area to reach the treatment centre more quickly. I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I am keen to see the treatment centres used as much as possible, and I welcome the opportunity provided by this question to say that anyone who has a problem with receiving treatment for their cataracts, and who has waited for more than four months, is entitled to apply to go to the treatment centre.

University Hospital of Wales

10. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to meet the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority to discuss the future status of the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Mr. Morgan: I will give another example of the problem to which the previous question referred. While the junior Minister has been going round trying to interest the University hospital of Wales in trust status, his waiting list policy has failed to stem the inexorable rise in numbers. As for the treatment centre at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar, in my constituency, a patient from Clwyd arrived there last week for a knee operation, but because the centre had already reached its quota of three knees from Clwyd for this financial year, that patient returned home without undergoing an operation. Does the Minister agree that that is a further scandalous example of our market-driven health service? Is it not time he resigned and made way for a Minister who really wants to see a national health service in Wales?

Mr. Bennett: My interest in the NHS in Wales is exemplified by the fact that in the past two weeks I have visited all five of the hospitals which, between them, account for 50 per cent. of the waiting list. I have spoken to consultants and managers about how they may tackle the problems. The Government are interested. We spent £5 million on the treatment initiative since 1986, and this year we have approved expenditure of £1·3 million towards the waiting list initiative, including the establishment of a fourth treatment centre. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me about the particular case that he mentioned, I will certainly investigate it. However, I cannot be expected to carry in my head the details of the 2·9 million people treated in Wales.

Welsh Language

11. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will widen the exemption from the study of Welsh as a second language at key stage four.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am satisfied that the limited exemptions we proposed are adequate to meet particular local circumstances.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister agree that if a child reaches the age of 13 and he or she does not get on with learning Welsh as a second language, has no aptitude for it or, worse, simply hates the Welsh language, it is counter-productive for the Minister to insist that such a child should continue to learn Welsh as a second language? Does the Minister agree that it is also counter-productive for the well-being and prosperity of the language itself, which we all want to see?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman's remarks about a child's aptitude for learning Welsh are surely true of any subject in the national curriculum. Is he suggesting that a child who does not show an aptitude for mathematics, English, or any other curriculum subject, should be allowed to opt out of it at the age of 13?

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend say what measures he has taken to ensure an adequate supply of teachers of Welsh as a second language and as a first language?

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have taken substantial steps to ensure that there is an adequate supply of teachers. Clearly, there will be more teachers of Welsh and of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh in the coming years. Welsh is regarded and registered as a shortage subject.

We have provided bursaries to encourage students to go in for teaching Welsh. We have encouraged teachers on initial training courses to take up Welsh, and we are spending a record sum of £1·8 million this year alone on in-service training for teachers. I am delighted to say that many non-Welsh-speaking teachers are showing considerable interest in learning to teach the language.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the figure for male unemployment in Wales expressed in percentage terms; and what was the comparable figure for the three previous years.

Mr. David Hunt: The rate was 11·2 per cent; for previous years the rates were 8·2 per cent. for 1990, 9·5 per cent. for 1989 and 12·5 per cent. for 1988.

Mr. Hughes: Is it not appalling that, after 12 long years of Conservative Government, unemployment in Wales is once again rocketing? Does the Secretary of State recall that Newport was to be the flagship of Government policies? Yet Newport, East—my constituency—is now among the areas worst affected by unemployment. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that my constituents do not believe that it is worth paying that price for the follies of the Government.

Mr. Hunt: If the hon. Gentleman probes the figures that I announced, and considers the long-term unemployed, about whom I was especially concerned a few years ago, he will see that in the past five years the number of long-term unemployed has fallen from 78,014 to 25,626—a steeper reduction than that in the United Kingdom as a whole. We ought to be shouting about those successes rather than preaching gloom and doom. I shall continue to sing the praises of Wales as the place to invest, whether companies are already established there or are coming to Wales for the first time.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall not take a point of order now. I shall take it at the end of Question Time.

Mr. Rogers: It is the end of Welsh Question time.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order at the end of Question Time.

Mr. Rogers: You have taken points of order during Question Time before, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Gentleman not to argue with the Chair. Sit down, please.

Mr. Rogers: But you have taken points of order——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is a Front-Bench spokesman and knows far better than that. He knows that I take points of order after questions, and I shall take his point of order then, even though I suspect that I know what it is.

THE ARTS

London Arts Funding

31. **Mr. Tony Banks** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will meet local authority leaders to discuss arts funding in London.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): In consultation with ministerial colleagues, I am currently considering how arrangements for the funding of the arts in London can be improved. As part of that process, we are seeking the views of the funding agencies and other interested bodies.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that about 200,000 jobs in London are dependent on the arts, entertainment and culture, and that there is an arts crisis in the capital city, brought about by the recession, the pressure on local authorities, and the derisory 2 per cent. that Greater London Arts has been given by the Arts Council? Will the Minister make it clear to the House—he has not done so in the past—that he is prepared to meet the Association of London Authorities and the London Boroughs Association? The resolution of the arts crisis in London will determine whether he will be considered a good Minister for the Arts or someone from the Herman Goering school of culture.

Mr. Renton: I wholly disagree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there is a crisis in the arts in London. Does crisis mean a time when the new Sackler gallery at the Royal Academy is about to open, as are the Sainsbury wing at the National Gallery and the Tsui gallery at the Victoria and Albert museum? The Royal Shakespeare Company is successfully back at the Barbican, and the National theatre is having an immensely successful season. If that is crisis, give me crisis. The hon.

Gentleman should know, too, that there are some exciting new projects being founded in Newham—the Atherton arts centre, for example, and a short-term post at the Gill gallery.

Certainly I am willing to meet the bodies that the hon. Gentleman suggests, but it does no good for him or for others to talk about a crisis that simply does not exist.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that London is the arts capital of the world, with a fine range of theatres, concerts, operas, ballets, museums and art galleries which taken together, comprise a priceless national asset? Does he agree that it is utterly disgraceful that it should be constantly run down by Opposition Members?

Mr. Renton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's remarks. At the moment, we are witnessing a number of very great successes in the arts world in London. Difficulties have, indeed, arisen in connection with the London boroughs grants scheme, and I regret that it took so long for a budget to be decided upon. I urged those involved to speed the process up, and I have talked about the matter with the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is, none the less, worth remembering that, despite difficulties with eight companies—the LBGS clients which may face closure—Greater London Arts is supporting 161 revenue clients and 1,000 project-funded clients, and the LBGS still supports some 114 artistic companies. Those are all signs not of crisis but of a very active arts scene in London.

Mr. Fisher: I welcome the fact that, after six months of developing crisis, the Minister is at long last prepared to say that he will meet his colleagues, and meet the bodies that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) suggested. That is a constructive move, but it has taken a long time. When the Minister meets those concerned, will he at last take it from them that there is a crisis in the arts in London, and that it is a crisis caused by his Government's poll tax, which is taking more than £3 million away from community arts in London? The Minister may not reckon that community arts are very important, but I hope that he will listen to those concerned and understand that they are indeed important. Unless the Minister addresses that problem and keeps an open mind about it, the fact that he has sat there doing nothing for six months will be to his discredit.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman exaggerates to such an extent as to make his own argument absurd. He knows that there is not a £3 million shortage or deficit in arts funding in London. In fact, there is a £400,000 shortage —a 15 per cent. reduction—this year. What arts body in London have I refused to meet in the past six months when it wished to see me about an arts problem? The answer is none. The hon. Gentleman speaks of crisis so often that he himself is suffering from crisis fatigue. His solution is to reinvent the greater London authority. He does not seem to realise that a Ken Livingstone mark 2 would have the same effect on the arts bodies as a rebirth of Dracula would have on those suffering from pernicious anaemia.

32. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he intends to meet the chair of Greater London Arts to discuss arts funding in London.

33. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will meet the chair of Greater London Arts to discuss the state of arts services in London.

Mr. Renton: I have no further plans to meet the chair of Greater London Arts. I intend to meet Mr. Clive Priestley, the chair-designate of the London Arts Board, from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Smith: The Minister speaks as though there are no problems with the arts in London. He must know, in his heart of hearts, that that is far from the truth. He must know that the sheer deficiencies of the London boroughs grants scheme, as a scheme, have led to substantial cuts in the arts in London in recent months. He must know that the Arts Council has given only 2·5 per cent.—way below inflation—in increased funding to Greater London Arts this year. He must know that a number of arts institutions —including, for example, the Almeida and King's Head theatres in my constituency—are in serious peril as a result of the problems that we face. It is time that the Minister put his money where his mouth is and devoted extra funds to supporting the arts in London, rather than continuing —however many talks he may have—to wash his hands of the problem.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is being less than honest and less than frank. The Almeida theatre has had its funding increased by 8 per cent. by Greater London Arts, which is indirectly funded by my office. He should know that and he should recognise it. The body that is not increasing the theatre's funding is Islington borough council. As I have told the hon. Gentleman before, he should bring his influence to bear to ensure that Labour councillors do not simply push their arts clients over the table into the waste paper basket when there are financial difficulties—often created by the councillors themselves —in their area.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Minister welcome Labour's innovative idea of a London leisure card, which will give reduced admission for Londoners to all sorts of events? The Minister has not had such an idea in all his term in office—unless he can cite one to the House now. As far as the capital of culture is concerned, he is rapidly becoming known as the Minister of farce, not arts.

Mr. Renton: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could amuse himself greatly in a London leisure park. He would fit in very well indeed and his presence there would cause great mirth to Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. Friend thank the London arts, past and present, and the Arts Council of Great Britain for coming to the rescue of those London arts bodies that have been abandoned by the London boroughs grants scheme, and will he seek an early conclusion to the abolition of that body, which is Labour run? It bodes ill for any proposed Londonwide scheme set up by the Labour party that the London boroughs grants scheme under that party and with Liberal collusion has let down the arts in London.

Mr. Renton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's sensible and balanced comments. The Arts Council—and Greater London Arts, shortly to be replaced by the London Arts Board—are doing their stuff as regards funding arts organisations in London. I agree with him that where it has gone wrong in recent months has been

with the London boroughs grants scheme and it is for precisely that reason that, in an answer to an earlier question, I said that I am discussing with ministerial colleagues whether the LBGS should continue in its present form or whether there is some better means of directing that funding to arts clients in London without creating a greater London authority mark 2—as the Labour party would, with about 20,000 civil servants, if past experience is anything to go by.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there should be no more haemorrhaging of funds for the arts from London to the regions? [HON. MEMBERS' "No!"] I am not saying that there should not be more funds for London and the regions, but it would be quite wrong to advantage the regions to the disadvantage of Londoners as regards the arts, important though both the regions and London are.

Mr. Renton: Much as I respect my hon. Friend's determination to fight the Ealing corner, I do not agree with his general comments. London is still the best funded of all the regions on the basis of arts money per head of population, even when funding of the nationals is taken out of consideration. It is important for the Arts Council to spread the money available around to the most distant parts of the United Kingdom to encourage al sorts of art festivals in every part of the land.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ministerial Duties

40. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how much of his time is spent on civil service matters.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Tim Renton): In the past months, approximately 20 per cent., but obviously that can and would be varied in the light of any specific requirements.

Mr. Favell: With the establishment of next steps executive agencies, does my right hon. Friend spend more or less time on civil service matters?

Mr. Renton: From my point of view, with the establishment of so many next steps agencies the difference is that I make certain that I call on the agency in any part of the country that I am visiting. That gives me the opportunity to find out how for example the employment or the HMSO executive agencies are working out and to get some first-hand idea of the successes and of the continuing challenges remaining to the agencies.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the right hon. Gentleman take time off from his work on civil service matters to consider, wearing his other hat, the predicament of the National theatre?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not on this question.

Press Officers

41. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many former press officers have been vetted by the business appointments committee for subsequent employment in the last 12 months.

Mr. Renton: It is not our practice to provide detailed information of this kind about the operation of business appointment rules. Individual applications are received and treated in confidence.

Mr. Banks: Would it not be appropriate for Sir Bernard Ingham to be vetted as a former press officer—preferably with two bricks? After all, he played the role of deputy Prime Minister, undermined democratically elected Cabinet Ministers, contravened the Official Secrets Act and knows where all the bodies are buried. Is it not outrageous that he can go outside the civil service and earn vast amounts of money for those misdeeds?

Mr. Renton: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has a lot of fun asking such a question, but for two years Sir Bernard Ingham cannot take up any outside commercial appointment without first seeking approval and without the application being scrutinised by the advisory committee on business appointments, which is chaired by Lord Carlisle.

Sir Michael Marshall: Is it not true that, subject to the appropriate vetting to which my right hon. Friend referred, there is every incentive to allow senior civil servants to move into industry? We need more interchange between the civil service and the private sector. One of our great national failings is that there is not enough.

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is much more interchange between the private sector and the civil service in France, permitting a much more balanced and wide-ranging career structure. Interchange is to be encouraged.

Civil Service Fast Stream

42. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how he proposes to further encourage applications for the civil service fast stream from non-Oxbridge and polytechnic graduates.

Mr. Renton: It is the Government's policy to encourage the widest possible spread of applications for the fast stream. In 1990, applications were received from more than 90 degree-awarding institutions other than Oxbridge.

Mr. Jessel: Can my right hon. Friend project the trend and say what proportion of the fast stream this year are likely to be non-Oxbridge?

Mr. Renton: No, I cannot do that because the first round of interviews is taking place now at colleges and polytechnics. In 1985, 42 per cent. came from Oxbridge, in 1989 the figure was 36 per cent., and last year it was 34 per cent.

Dr. Marek: The Minister is very good at giving platitudes to the House and being rude to my hon. Friends. I give him a chance to answer a question straightforwardly and, at the same time, to increase the percentage of the time that he spends on civil service matters. If only a third of successful applicants to the fast stream come from outside Oxbridge, that is unsatisfactory. Will the Minister meet representatives of the civil service trade unions to thrash out a generally agreed programme of action to correct the clear injustice being done to applicants from outside Oxbridge? I suspect that the same request also applies to question No. 43.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman accuses me of exchanging platitudes. In fact, I was exchanging statistics, but I do not think that he listened. I said that in 1990 only one third—34 per cent.—of fast-stream entrants came from Oxbridge, as opposed to 42 per cent. in 1985. So it is one third, not two thirds, so perhaps he will listen more attentively. I am always prepared to meet representatives of the civil service. If they want to discuss a matter, I should be glad to meet them. The trend of broadening the range of colleges and polytechnics from which fast stream applicants are welcomed is working satisfactorily.

"Kill the Messenger"

44. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will obtain a copy of "Kill the Messenger" by Sir Bernard Ingham for his office's library.

Mr. Renton: No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: To return to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), does the Minister realise that many of my hon. Friends do not think that there is anything funny about Sir Bernard Ingham's activities during the past 12 years? What is so special about Sir Bernard Ingham's position that the two-year rule has not applied to his book? Can any other civil servant now take it as a matter of course that he or she will be entitled to go away and write a book about the heart of Government?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair and incorrect. Sir Bernard Ingham submitted his memoirs to Sir Robin Butler as Cabinet Secretary and head of the civil service. Sir Robin Butler cleared the draft of the book, Sir Bernard Ingham made all the cuts requested and is not responsible for the *Sunday Times* article.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and find the money to buy a copy of the book? If he has any money left, will he obtain a remaindered copy of the Crossman diaries to find out how effective intrigue and political assassination were at the time of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Renton: I support my hon. Friend's remarks. Those Opposition Members who get so worked up about Sir Bernard Ingham's book would do well to refresh their minds about what happened under the Government of Lord Wilson in relation to the Crossman diaries and the memoirs of Joe Haines. As to whether I shall buy a copy of the book, my office is dedicated to efficiency and value for money, but one of my private secretaries has kindly lent me her copy.

Promotion

45. **Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will ensure that promotion within the senior civil service gives due weight to experience in executive agencies and practical management skills in the future.

Mr. Renton: Yes. Management skills and experience are increasingly important for those seeking civil service posts. The opportunities for management experience provided by next steps agencies and by interchange with business at all levels will undoubtedly enhance the skills of many civil servants.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Skinner—*[Interruption.]* I am getting confused. Sir Michael Marshall.

Sir Michael Marshall: A natural mistake, Mr. Speaker.

Apropos my earlier comments this afternoon, does my right hon. Friend realise that I would warmly welcome anything to improve the opportunity for interchange between industry and the civil service, particularly in management training? Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the possibility of using British business schools for civil servants—a subject on which, in the past, it has proved impossible to persuade Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Renton: I never thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) would be mistaken for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). That is a new sort of interchange—quite different from that to which my hon. Friend referred.

I agree with the spirit of what my hon. Friend said. In 1989, there were 432 secondments of more than three months' duration from the civil service to industry, compared with 331 in 1988. If we can take advantage of the business school experience to which my hon. Friend referred, I shall suggest to civil servants in my Department that we do so.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Hon. Members: Sir Dennis.

Trade Unions

46. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last discussed the question of civil service conditions of work with trade union representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on!"] It was the reference to "Sir Dennis" that upset me.

I meet civil service trade union representatives from time to time to discuss a wide variety of issues.

Mr. Skinner: Being knighted does not upset me because it ain't going to happen.

In his discussions with trade union representatives, will the Minister bear in mind that it is high time that he stopped slagging off low-paid civil servants who are trying to keep their wages in relation to inflation and compare them with some of the bosses in British industry such as the head of British Telecom, who was given an increase of 43 per cent. last week? Instead of offering these civil servants between 6 and 7 per cent., why do the Government not give them the going rate that their bosses got last year, which was 22·7 per cent?

Mr. Renton: First, I congratulate the hon. Member on sticking to his principles and not going to the Labour fund-raising banquet last week with all the glitterati. I agree with his thoughts about smoked salmon socialism.

As for the hon. Gentleman's comments about low-paid civil servants, the average settlement this year is in the range of 8 to 8·5 per cent.—well ahead of the current rate of inflation. I am glad to say that many civil servants will benefit from that.

Mr. Alan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Now, what is this point of order?

Mr. Rogers: First, I want to say how sorry I am to have shouted at you, Mr. Speaker, in the middle of Question Time. However, I am sure that you understand the strength of the feelings of Welsh Opposition Members. We have only 40 minutes of Welsh questions each month and we do not have the discretion to run over by four minutes, as happened in this instance—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the question is being addressed to me.

Mr. Rogers: The Opposition are in a difficult position. When the rules on Welsh Question Time were laid down, we had a certain number of Welsh Members. In the past year or so, we have anihilated the Government by winning by-elections. There is now severe pressure on the time during which Opposition Members can participate in Welsh questions. As many of us refrain from interfering in other Question Times because we want to bring matters up during Welsh Question Time, will you, Mr. Speaker, look at the rules under which Wesh Question Time takes place with a view to extending the time?

Meanwhile, the Government have to introduce all sorts of strange individuals to put questions—especially those who roll in here, are called about 10 seconds later, and put questions that have nothing to do with their constituencies. Will you please look at the matter?

Mr. Speaker: I am well aware of the frustration of not being called at Question Time. As I said, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is himself a Front-Bench spokesman, and I call Front-Bench Members whenever they rise. Today I called 18 Welsh Opposition Members, and I call seven Conservative Members, of whom three had questions on the Order Paper. I do not think that that balance gives the Government side an unfair advantage —indeed, rather the reverse.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am still on my feet.

Furthermore, this is a United Kingdom Parliament. The hon. Member for Rhondda is a Front-Bench spokesman on defence and he fully expects to take part in Defence Question Time. I must tell him and other Front-Bench Members that I regret that during questions to other Departments I cannot give them the same preference that I give to Back-Bench Members because they have an automatic right to be called when they sit on the Front Bench.

Mr. Alan Williams: We well understand the need to continue to recognise that this is a United Kingdom Parliament. However, I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, understand that it is offensive to those of us who have so limited an opportunity to represent the point of view of our constituents if an hon. Member comes into the Chamber, sits down and within seconds is called when those of us who have been sitting here since the start of Question Time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot always take account of when hon. Members come in——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not have eyes in the back of my head. I seek to keep a balance.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose*——

Hon. Members: What about Dickens?

Mr. Speaker: I could hardly mistake him.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I really think that we have had enough of this. We have a guillotine today. However, as I have mentioned the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), I will call him.

Mr. Dickens: I have been here for Northern Irish questions, for Scottish questions and for Welsh questions. As millions of pounds from England is spent on those countries, I feel entitled to come to Welsh Question Time and to scrutinise how money is spent. We pour in millions of pounds to support Wales.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we have had enough of this now.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the eighth motion relating to statutory instruments is not to be moved. With the leave of the House, I will put together the remaining seven questions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Vienna Document (Privileges and Immunities) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1235) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 2) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1295) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 3) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1296) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Scotland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Confiscation of the Proceeds of Drug Trafficking (Designated Countries and Territories) (Scotland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I take points of order now, that will take time from the guillotine motion——

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, please. Points of order now take time from the allocation of time motion and the Second Reading, and a great many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in that debate.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you would agree in the circumstances that it would not be right to proceed with the important legislation that we are about to debate without acknowledging the tremendous English success in the test match. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport is at the Bar of the Chamber, it would be appropriate for the House to convey to the England team, to my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport and to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister its enormous thanks to the efforts of our team and the inspiration of our Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: I am not certain whether there is any Government responsibility for that.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I point out to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) that it was not an English cricket team, but a British cricket team? The principal bowler is from Glamorgan.

Mr. Speaker: That is very good news.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does this have something to do with the Bermondsey cricket team?

Mr. Hughes: No, I wish it had. What is it necessary for my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) to do as the Liberal Democrats' art spokesman other than to table a question for the ballot, attend throughout Question Time and rise at each opportunity in order to be called on the rare occasion——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can give the hon. Gentleman a short answer. The questions were about London, and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is not a London Member.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk will now proceed to read the Orders of the Day.

Mr. Maclennan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should reflect that he has asked to be called on the guillotine motion and on Second Reading. Is it not overdoing it a bit to be asked to be called at Question Time as well?

Mr. Maclennan: During Welsh questions you made it plain that one does not need to be a Welsh person to ask questions about Wales. By the same token, one does not need to be a Londoner to ask questions about the arts in London. Furthermore, the opportunity to ask questions about the arts is limited——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is challenging my discretion. If he looks at the Order Paper, he will see how difficult it would have been for me to go over to his side of the Chamber, given that questions Nos. 32 and 33 today were linked in that short time. I am very sorry that I could not call the hon. Gentleman. As the Leader of the Opposition said when I was chosen as Speaker on the second occasion, unhappily in this Chamber no hon. Member can expect to be called on the day he wants, on the subject he wants and at the time he wants.

Mr. Ron Davies: I hesitate to intervene, Mr. Speaker, but further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), you directly contradicted your earlier ruling. May I remind you that in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), you said that you were quite happy to call hon. Members from whichever part of the United Kingdom they represented because the matters were before the House and this is a United Kingdom Parliament. However, in reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, you specifically said that you refused to call the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) because the matters on the Order Paper were London matters and he had no constituency interest in them. Those two rulings are absolutely contradictory. I press on you the point raised——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who was called today, would be best advised to come and have a glass of milk with me later this evening and I will explain my difficulties in calling every hon. Member who wishes to participate in Welsh or Scottish questions. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) can come too.

Mr. Conway: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during Arts questions you called eight Members to speak about Greater London arts funding seven of whom were from London. Those of us who were also bobbing up and down at the time trying to catch your eye to explain that arts exist in the regions—*[Interruption.]*—have not complained about that in points of order. However, we observe that hon. Members on the Liberal Benches, who get a disproportionate opportunity to take part, leave the Chamber as soon as they have recorded a view—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dangerous Dogs Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.44 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Dangerous Dogs Bill—

Second Reading

1. The proceedings on Second Reading shall be completed at this day's sitting and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

Committee

2. (1) In Committee, proceedings on any new Clauses relating to the registration of dogs shall be taken before proceedings on the Clauses.

(2) Proceedings in Committee on new Clauses relating to the registration of dogs shall be brought to a conclusion at 1 a.m. at this day's sitting.

(3) The remaining proceedings in Committee shall be completed at this day's sitting and shall be brought to a conclusion at 3 a.m.

Report and Third Reading

3. The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading shall be completed at this day's sitting and shall be brought to a conclusion at 4 a.m.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

4. On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill, as amended, without any Question being put.

Order of proceedings

5. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration are taken.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings at this day's sitting shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown; and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

7. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings at this day's sitting.

Conclusion of proceedings

8.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order at this day's sitting.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) If a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings which, under this Order are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

9.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If at this day's sitting the House is adjourned, or if this day's sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

10. Nothing in this Order shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommital

11.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages, respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommital.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Business Committee

12. Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

I can explain quite briefly why the Government have tabled this timetable motion for the Dangerous Dogs Bill, as well as outline how it provides for proceedings on the Bill today to be conducted. I shall not say much about the substance of the Bill—that will be for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State in subsequent speeches.

I made it clear in the course of Business Questions last Thursday, when I announced the timetable motion, why the Government consider it essential to get this Bill through its Commons stages as quickly as possible. Our constituents, the country as a whole, but, most of all, those who have been affected by the menace of fighting dogs, or who go in fear of them, would not forgive us if we failed to get legislation to control those deadly animals in place at the earliest possible opportunity.

The House knows that, following the consultation paper published in June last year, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary had made it clear that he would be bringing forward proposals this summer—that is, of course, in relation to other than fighting dogs. It obviously makes sense now to include in the Bill the new offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place, and the power for the courts to specify measures, including muzzling, to be taken to control any dog considered likely to be dangerous. The Bill also provides, in clause 2, additional reserve powers for the Secretary of State to deal with other types of dog that present a serious danger to the public. But it is for the provisions on pit bull terriers and other fighting dogs in clause 1 that speed is so necessary.

We intend that almost all the criminal offences should come into force very quickly after the Bill becomes law. Once the Bill is enacted, it will be an offence to breed those

dogs, sell them, give them away, advertise them for sale or exchange or as a gift, abandon them, or let them stray. It will be an offence not to have those dogs on a lead and muzzled. It will also be an offence to allow any dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place.

Those are vital parts of the Bill which we need to have in place for the summer, particularly in relation to breeding and having the dogs on a lead and muzzled. That is fully set out in clause 1(2). The Bill therefore needs to pass through all its stages if we are to achieve that by the summer recess.

It is also essential that we put in place as quickly as possible the compensation and exemption schemes so that owners who wish to have their dogs put down and seek compensation and those who wish to retain their dogs, subject to very strict conditions, should be able to do that before the offence of possessing a prohibited dog comes into force on 30 November.

Indeed, I suspect that many members of the public who do not understand the technicalities of these matters may be puzzled and concerned as to why they have to wait that long—till 30 November—before the full provisions of the Bill are in place relating to the putting down of all dogs not licensed, the neutering of those that are licensed, and public protection and compensation through insurance.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Of course, the Government could have acted earlier. Is not it unique for a guillotine motion to be moved by the Government when there is very broad support for the Bill on Opposition Benches? In itself, that is a unique measure. Is not the truth —if the Leader of the House really wishes to be honest about it—that he fears that there is growing support on his side, as well as, obviously, on this side, for a dog registration scheme, which, for some odd reason, the Government are refusing to support?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall refer briefly to the dog registration aspect in relation to the guillotine in a moment, but the detailed issues of dog registration are for a later debate. I will certainly deal with that matter in a moment, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging that this is a unique measure and that it has support across the House. That is an important point which I shall address in a moment in relation to the timetable motion.

Mr. Winnick: The right hon. Gentleman misunderstood me. What I said was that it was unique for the Government to introduce a guillotine motion when there is broad support for the Bill.

Mr. MacGregor: All right. To take up exactly the hon. Gentleman's point, I am grateful that he regards it that way. However, as I shall make clear in a moment, even if there is widespread support for the Bill throughout the House, a timetable motion is necessary if we are to achieve the timetable for the implementation of the Bill that I have outlined. I shall come to that issue at the appropriate point in my remarks.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As the Home Secretary wants to rush this Bill through, and as people out there with pit bull terriers have told Members of Parliament, including myself, that they cannot get insurance for their dogs, will the Leader of the House have a word with the Home Secretary? If there will not be much time to debate the matter, before the Leader of the House sits down he ought, having had a word with the Home Secretary, to tell the House, in the short time available, which insurance firms are prepared to take on the insurance of these dogs. People out there want to know.

Mr. MacGregor: That is a fair point, but I do not believe that it is one for the timetable motion. Let me assure the hon. Gentleman that I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will deal with that matter. There will be plenty of time during the proceedings later today for him to do so, and I am sure that he will.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): My right hon. Friend is appealing to the members of the public, many of whom will be unable to understand why the legislation cannot come into force immediately. Is it not both his and the Government's job to explain to those many members of the public that legislation is best conducted slowly and by the normal rules, and also to explain that that is the way in which the interests of minorities who are affected are best safeguarded?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope to come shortly to that passage in my speech which explains exactly why we are endeavouring to get the Bill on the statute book as quickly as possible, which I am confident is what the public want, and yet provide enough time for debate to ensure that those interests are safeguarded.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): While the Leader of the House goes about explaining all this, will he also tell the general public why it was that, when the provisions that are in front of the House today were in front of the House in March 1990, the Government voted them down? If there is such great enthusiasm for this Bill, why did the Government not support the amendment to the Environmental Protection Bill that would have met all the demands that are now included in this Bill?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that we are now getting to the substance of the Bill. These are certainly points that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will happily take up on Second Reading. I am anxious to stick to explaining the urgency of the Bill and the manner in which we are endeavouring to achieve its implementation, not to go over all the details of the Bill. That, I believe, would be self-defeating.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Although I recognise the need for speed, I called on the Government to ban the import of pit bull terriers eight years ago. It is a pity that they did not take my advice at that time. Although we recognise the need for speed, it is essential that the Bill should become an effective instrument. A number of people have observed deficiences in it—for example, one in clause 4 that needs to be put right. The need for speed should not remove the need for accuracy in legislation that we pass in this place.

Mr. MacGregor: I had hoped to deal with that point also at the appropriate place in my argument, but let me deal with it now. There will be opportunities in the House, during what will effectively be a two-day debate, to deal with all these issues. All the amendments are in front of us. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has gone through them all. There will also be opportunities in the other place. Furthermore, if necessary, the Bill can return to this place.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will the Leader of the House give way?

Mr. MacGregor: Before I give way again—I have done so very generously—may I finish the point that I was raising?

Many members of the public may well be puzzled and concerned about why we have to wait until 30 November before those parts of the Bill that relate to the putting down of dogs and to the introduction of the new system for fighting dogs are in place. Of course, the House understands why we must wait until 30 November—

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: If I may, I shall finish my argument first.

To many people, when they know that these fighting dogs will still be around, 30 November looks a long time away. I do not know what position the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) took when the dogs were first allowed to be imported, but that was when the pass was sold. It was a considerable time ago, under a previous Government.

Two points are worth spelling out in detail so that everyone, not only in the House but in the country, fully appreciates the need for speed. Here I wish to respond to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen).

First, there must be a reasonable period for owners to make their decisions about the alternative course of action that they wish to pursue, then to complete the necessary procedures. That period can begin only when Royal Assent has been achieved. This is based on the assumption that Royal Assent will be given by the summer—hence the need to get Royal Assent as quickly as possible. Otherwise, these provisions may not be in place until the end of February next year. I believe that we would be open to justifiable criticism——

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The right hon. Gentleman does not believe a word of it.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman obviously does not understand. These are simple, straightforward facts. This is the basis on which the decision has been taken. If the House of Commons and the other place decided to adopt these measures as a protection for the public, we would be open to justifiable criticism if we subjected innocent citizens to the risk of further serious injury for those additional months.

That brings me to the second point: why is it necessary to timetable the Bill this week to meet the deadline of achieving Royal Assent by the summer recess? As I worked the timetable back, it became clear to me that it was necessary to get the Bill to the House of Lords before the end of this week. The reason for that is that it would not be possible to abbreviate the customary procedures in the House of Lords. Given also the possibility—which I must take into account—of further exchanges between the House of Lords and the House of Commons after the Lords have completed their consideration of the Bill, that target of passing the Bill effectively sets itself, if we are to be sure of meeting the target of Royal Assent by the summer recess.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Has my right hon. Friend taken note of the fact that his arguments almost perfectly match those on the Football Spectators Bill? We were told that there was an imperative need to pass that Bill or terrible things would happen. A monkey was made of the House. Should we not treat this Bill a little more cautiously than my right hon. Friend has suggested?

Mr. MacGregor: If my hon. Friend does not want the Bill to be passed, he can advance his arguments against aspects of it on Second Reading and in Committee. He seems to be doubtful whether we should consider the Bill quickly. I believe that that is not the view that the country will take, that it wants the measure put on the statute book quickly. What is more——

Mr. Harry Ewing *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: Let me finish this point.

It was clear during questions on several business statements that I have made in recent weeks, particularly in the exchanges last Thursday, that the Bill has the support of everyone in the House. That is an important aspect of the Bill.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Leader of the House aware that I am angry at the fact that he chose 30 November as the implementation date of the Bill? Is he aware that that is St. Andrew's day? The Home Secretary has made such a dog's breakfast of this issue that we should implement the Bill on his birthday, if only to commemorate his ineptitude and incompetence.

Mr. MacGregor: As one who attended St. Andrew's university, I regard that as a feeble point. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman might be pleased that everything to ensure the protection of the public would be in operation by that date.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend realise that the constant appeals to popular opinion will stick in some of our throats? Is it not his job to explain to popular opinion that the normal legislative procedures give safeguards to everybody who might be concerned, especially in this case, where there is the strong suspicion that the Government might be legislating simply as a result of pressure from popular newspapers? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that there should be a proper gap between Second Reading and Committee stage, so that those who have seen the Government change their position on many occasions will have a proper opportunity to put forward their views and to explain why the Government may be wrong in some details?

Mr. MacGregor: By being as quick as I can, I hope that I shall be able to give my hon. Friend and the other hon. Members who wish to explain their views the opportunity to do so. I totally reject the view that the Bill has been introduced in response to pressure from some popular newspapers. It has been introduced in response to widespread public concern, which is totally shared by all members of the Government, at some of the recent incidents in which innocent people have been injured by pit bull terriers. As a party to the introduction of the Bill and being strongly in favour of it, I have been motivated by the thought that more innocent people—children and adults—might be——

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn) *rose*——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit.

Mr. MacGregor: I thought that we might hear something like that today.

We have a duty to protect the public from fighting dogs. We can all think of what could happen to innocent citizens. Given that that is the decision that we have reached, it seems right to proceed with the Bill speedily, so that we can achieve our objective of protecting the public. That is not only the view of some popular newspapers; it is widespread in the House.

Mr. Michael J. Martin *rose*——

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: Although I must get on, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who has not yet intervened.

Mr. Maclennan: Does not the Leader of the House recognise that his argument about the need to have the matter concluded before the summer recess would carry some credibility if he had approached the Opposition parties about a sensible timetable motion, instead of simply tabling something without any consultation? The only approach to my party concerned the sensitive question of registration and our attitude to it.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government had to take into account the timetable that I am still outlining. So far, I have dealt only with the point about protecting the public from attacks by fighting dogs. I have two other points to make in relation——

Mr. Michael J. Martin *rose*——

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I must be allowed to answer. I am halfway through a sentence in response to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland. If hon. Members continue to interrupt my speech, I shall not give way to them, because they are being most unfair. I have two other points to make about the need for speed.

In the timetable motion, we have responded to the desire not only of the Opposition but of many hon. Members for another debate on dog registration and have taken that desire fully into account. However, when engaging in discussions with all concerned about not having any timetable motion, I have also had to bear in mind the fact that we all know of the risk that it might not be possible to ensure that everything that has been agreed between the usual channels will be adhered to unless we have a timetable motion. I have been trying to meet what I know are the wishes of the House, while also achieving speed. As we do not want to spend all our time on this point, perhaps I can now be allowed to get on with the arguments with which I should like to finish my speech.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I am not giving way for the moment. I am sorry, but I must get on.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As a great many hon. Members wish to participate in the Second Reading debate, it might be helpful if we could now get on.

Mr. MacGregor: There are further reasons why speed is essential. There is clearly a danger that those involved in the breeding of fighting dogs may seek to make the maximum use of any time that remains before the Bill reaches the statute book, so we want the Bill to be enacted as soon as possible, before there are large numbers of additional prohibited dogs.

Another more technical reason for speed concerns the import ban. As the House knows, an import ban on these fighting dogs was introduced when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made his statement to the House. Maintaining an import ban without a corresponding domestic ban would place us in breach of our international obligations. We must therefore underwrite the import ban by putting the domestic controls in place as soon as possible.

Those who sit on the Opposition Front Bench have said that they will co-operate in getting the Bill through the House quickly to meet the deadline to which I have already referred. That, however, does not guarantee the necessary speed. Even if most hon. Members say that they will co-operate in dealing with the Bill speedily, and those who have spoken so far have taken that view, the Government must be sure, in the interests of protecting the public, that the House as a whole meets the deadline.

Moreover, we have other vital business to get through this week, and a Supply day. We have a commitment to the Opposition, and to the House in general, to the number of Supply days in the Session, and I need to find regular time to fulfil the commitment. I have been making it clear to the House for some time that we have a great deal of business to complete before we can rise for the summer recess. As it is, I can hold out no prospect of the House rising as early as I have sometimes seen suggested in the press.

As for the arguments that the timetable motion will prevent adequate time for debate on the Bill, the fact is that the motion provides for broadly the equivalent of two days to consider the Bill. I believe that that achieves the right balance between speed to meet our deadline and the time which would be required, as suggested in the discussions that we have had through the usual channels, to cover the Bill's provisions in sufficient detail. The timetable motion thus provides a reasonable amount of time overall for the various stages of the Bill's consideration.

It may help hon. Members if I briefly explain the motion's main provisions. Paragraph 1 provides for Second Reading to end at 10 pm. In line with the procedure motion agreed by the House last Thursday, the money resolution that is necessary for the Bill may then be considered. Under normal Standing Orders, that is exempted business for a maximum of 45 minutes, but time not spent on the money resolution will present additional time for consideration in Committee.

Paragraph 2(3) provides for consideration in Committee to conclude at 3 am, so we have provided for a reasonable amount of time to debate the amendments that have been tabled. We have been told already—the point has already been made by more than one hon. Member—that the Bill has broad all-party support, and it has been made clear that most hon. Members are keen to

[Mr. MacGregor]

expedite discussion. With the timetable motion, we have provided a framework within which that discussion can take place.

The Opposition made it clear that they expected a debate on dog registration, and we have specifically provided for it. Other hon. Members have said that they want the issue debated, and that is a further reason why we have made separate provision for it in the terms of the timetable motion. Paragraphs 2(1) and (2) make separate provision for new clauses on dog registration.

I must make it clear, however, that the Government's view of dog registration has not changed. The Bill is designed to control and, with the passage of time, eliminate from our society fighting dogs, which represent an unacceptable menace to innocent people. For this purpose, and for the additional controls on dogs of other types which show themselves to be a serious danger to the public, dog registration is irrelevant. The Bill is about eliminating fighting dogs from our society, not about registering them.

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman (Lancaster): Admittedly, the Bill is about dangerous dogs. We all accept that they are dangerous to human beings, and we want to eliminate them. We want also, however, to have some control over animals that are a menace to livestock, and a dog registration scheme would help farmers in dealing with the problem of sheep worrying.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not believe that to be true. What matters are controls on fighting dogs, dangerous dogs and individual dogs, and that is what the Bill is about. There are many instances in which dogs of the sort to which my hon. Friend refers would not be registered. I do not see the relevance of registration. I am saying, however, that the timetable motion allows reasonable time for yet another discussion of the issue.

We have debated dog registration several times during this Parliament. It was debated by both Houses when they considered the Local Government Act 1988. Last year, in the context of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, it was debated twice in this place and twice in another place. I do not think that there are any grounds for complaint that insufficient time has been given to the issue in the House, and we are providing for it specifically again today.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that the complaint is not about a lack of debate in the past, but that this Parliament passed an amendment to section 37 of the Local Government Act 1988 empowering the Government to act on producing a dog registration scheme? The powers have been consistently ignored from the moment that the Minister responsible said that, even if Parliament accepted the amendment, he would be ignoring those powers. That is outrageous. Hence our concern for a dog registration scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: There is a distinction on many issues between giving powers and deciding that the moment has come to operate or use them. We have made consistently clear all the way through our position on dog registration.

Paragraph 3 of the timetable motion brings Report stage, if amendments are passed which need to be reported, and Third Reading to a conclusion by 4 am. I do not think it is necessary for me to consider all the remaining provisions in the timetable motion.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, but for the last time.

Miss Hoey: Does not the Leader of the House agree that many members of the public wish to see the Bill approved as soon as possible, but, given our long holidays, they do not accept that we have to debate such an important issue at 4 o'clock in the morning? Is not that nonsense?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the hon. Lady is not suggesting that the long recess is a holiday for all hon. Members; clearly, it is not. Every time a suggestion of that kind is made, someone picks it up. I shall respond by pointing out that the vast majority, if not all, hon. Members have pretty short holidays and work on other matters during the recess.

When deciding the date of the recess and considering how quickly we can reach it—I have already warned that it is a considerable time away, and that earlier suggestions in the press were not correct—I have to take into account the pressures, not least from the hon. Lady's hon. Friends, to rise in time to enable hon. Members to go on holiday with their families. If the hon. Lady wishes to check that, she has only to consider the representations that are made to me if and when the House sits into August.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Dickens: That is generous of my right hon. Friend, especially because he said that he would not give way again.

As surely as night follows day, the timetable motion will be secured. Would we not do ourselves, you, Mr. Speaker, and the ladies and gentlemen of the press a favour if we accepted the opening speech, stayed in our places and voted on the timetable motion? We would save about three hours of our own time if we did that. Would it not be much more sensible for all hon. Members to resist the temptation to make a speech on the timetable motion?

Mr. MacGregor: In response to my hon. Friend's remarks on my generosity in giving way, I was about to say, "How could I resist?" I notice that he has not resisted the temptation or followed his own advice of not speaking on the timetable motion.

I am anxious to reach my conclusion. We want to get on to the substance of the Bill, so I shall not deal with paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 which are fairly technical and straightforward.

Paragraph 8 is the usual provision for disposing of outstanding questions when a knife falls; when that time is reached, the question will be put forthwith on proceedings then under discussion, together with other questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on which the knife has fallen. Again, as is usual with timetable motions, paragraph 8(3) provides that the putting of such questions shall not be interrupted.

Paragraph 10 is the standard provision that allows the House, should hon. Members wish, to move faster than

the timetable motion otherwise provides. I have noted that a number of hon. Members have suggested that they believe that the Bill will go through speedily. In fact, that may occur. I believe that the timetable motion provides a reasonable amount of time.

I have described the principal provisions of the timetable motion. I believe that the motion is necessary for a well-ordered debate on this extremely important Bill, and I commend it to the House.

4.15 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The guillotine motion is a perfect example of how, when Governments are falling apart, they do stupid things. Rarely has a Leader of the House had to struggle, as the right hon. Gentleman did, to convince even his own supporters of the necessity for a timetable motion for this legislation. Rarely has so thin a case taken so long to expound. Surely the lesson of the past 13 years is that rushing legislation through the House is not a good way to prepare laws that affect so many people. If the right hon. Gentleman had taken any notice of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), he would have thought long and hard about the Football Spectators Act 1989 and what happened to that, and about the poll tax and other legislation that the Government steamrollered through the House.

It is unprecedented for a Government to timetable a Bill that has the support in principle of the Opposition. We want the Bill to reach the statute book, not least because we have consistently argued for a series of measures to tackle the problems of stray and dangerous dogs. Even allowing for the fact that the Government decided, on their own account, to guillotine these discussions, it would have been more helpful had the right hon. Gentleman had some discussions about the nature of the timetable motion before it appeared on the Order Paper. The Government are more concerned about disguising their embarrassment and hiding away, in the middle of the night, the opposition of their Back Benchers to what they are—or, more accurately, are not—doing in this legislation, than they are about ensuring careful and considered discussion of the Bill.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, the Government have an abysmal record on dealing with dangerous dogs. As he also rightly said, the provisions in this legislation could have been on the statute book more than a year ago if the Government had really wanted that. I share the view of some Conservative Members that the Government are acting now, as they have on other occasions, out of expediency and in response to some of the criticisms of the tabloid press, and that they are failing comprehensively to deal with the problems.

People have been attacked, savaged and bitten by many different breeds of dogs for a very long time. The problem of fighting dogs, and pit bulls in particular, is just the latest manifestation of what has long been a widespread problem. The Bill is inadequate to deal with the whole of the problem because of the narrow way in which it has been drafted.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): It appears that the hon. Gentleman has not read the Bill. Had he done so, he would realise that, under clause 3, it will be an offence if a dog is dangerously out of control in a public place. The problem to which he averted—that is, dangerous dogs of any sort—will come under the provisions of that clause.

Dr. Cunningham: At first glance, the hon. Gentleman may be right. However, the Bill fails to say how dogs in public places are to be controlled, how a dangerous dog is to be defined and whose word is to be taken on what is a dangerous dog. Superficially, the hon. Gentleman may have a point, but further consideration of the proposals shows that the legislation is hopelessly inadequate.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Criticism comes not only from the tabloid press. People up and down the country are seriously worried about this matter. No matter what mistakes we have made—I include the Government in that —something should be done today. If that means discussing the matter until 4 am, we should do so, because people are terrified in their communities and in their homes.

Dr. Cunningham: No one dissents from my hon. Friend's view that something should be done. Along with my hon. Friends, I have argued for a long time that something should be done. The responsibility for the delay rests not with the Opposition but with the Government. If my hon. Friend is angry about the delay, he should direct his anger at the Government.

As my hon. Friend must know, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook and the shadow Cabinet have agreed to an accelerated procedure for the consideration of the Bill, taking its Second Reading one weekend after publication, because we know that there is a need not only to act, but to act more effectively and comprehensively than we will be able to do under the proposals in the Bill. Therefore, it is nonsense to have guillotined debate.

The Leader of the House has said that, effectively, we have two days in which to debate the Bill. Why should we not have had two normal days in which to debate it? Why push the discussions into the middle of the night and the early hours of the morning? There is no need for that, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it.

The Cabinet is terrified that, as in the past, many Government supporters will vote for a dog registration scheme. That is what the guillotine motion is all about. The Government know—as do people outside the House —that, if there were to be a free vote, the House would vote overwhelmingly to introduce a dog registration scheme. That is the reality, as the record shows.

I say to the Leader of the House, even at this late stage, that if he wants to organise a free vote on the Government Benches on this matter, even if it is in the early hours of the morning, we shall respond. That would be an honest decision by Parliament about what should be done. We shall not get an honest decision from many hon. Members who vote tonight, because they will be voting under the duress of a three-line Whip, again enforced by the Government Whips. We want to make that clear to the public, and I have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of people understand the procedure very well.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that most people understand very well that the Government's opposition to a dog registration scheme means that they are against a scheme that might have helped the young woman in Bradford who was left with a pit bull terrier, and

[Mr. Cryer]

given her proper guidance about the control of such a dog? A dog registration scheme may enable such accidents to be avoided, and might have saved Rucksana Khan.

Dr. Cunningham: I believe that a dog registration scheme will not, of itself, solve all the problems, but it will contribute to their solution. That is the important point. As the owner of a very large but good-natured dog, I know how easily people are frightened by dogs. That is not surprising, considering the lack of control of dogs in public areas such as parks and open spaces. No one has the responsibility for supervision or control. The Government have provided such legislation for Northern Ireland, but, despite the Bill being pushed through today, until we have a registration scheme here, our problems will remain.

The Leader of the House referred to the voting record. He seemed to say with some pride that the introduction of a dog registration scheme had been discussed and rejected. That is so, but on 14 June 1989 it was defeated by only 13 votes because of a Government Whip. On Report stage of the Environmental Protection Bill on 13 March 1990, the scheme was defeated by only 12 votes, and on Commons consideration of Lords amendments on 29 October 1990 it was defeated by three votes when the Government brought Ministers back from the four corners of the globe to vote against it. If the right hon. Gentleman questions whether in reality the House wants a dog registration scheme, let him allow the free vote that many Conservative Members would like, and it would certainly go through with a significant majority.

Mr. Marlow: The Government have a responsibility, as the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge, for dealing with problems relating to dogs—and to dangerous dogs in particular. The Government make proposals for that, just as they make proposals in other areas. This is Government legislation. Why does the hon. Gentleman feel that there should be a free vote on this particular Government legislation?

Dr. Cunningham: I well recall the hon. Gentleman urging his friends into the Lobby over many years to support Government legislation that, subsequently, many of them dearly wished that they had never set eyes on. On the poll tax legislation, the hon. Gentleman was one of those who subsequently repented, so I do not accept his argument.

There may not be a consensus on the Government Benches in favour of the dog registration scheme. I hazard a guess that there may be a greater consensus on the desire to muzzle the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). We are concerned that the House should be allowed openly and candidly to reach a decision after proper debate. That is why I believe that there should be a free vote.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and hon. Friends and I take a rather jaundiced view of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) standing at the Dispatch Box and suggesting that somehow he can organise an agreement across the Chamber. We know that the Opposition cannot deliver on such agreements. How often have they agreed when debates should finish, and how often have those agreements not been honoured? As a Scottish Member, I know how often the Opposition have failed to deliver. That is why we do not trust the hon. Gentleman or his Whips to deliver.

Dr. Cunningham: That was an incredible intervention. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand about delivering on a free vote, he does not understand very much. We are content that all my right hon. and hon. Friends should have a free vote on the Bill. It is not a question of delivering. It is a question of knowing what the House would really like to do, if it was not prevented by the right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury Bench.

Limited and weak though the Bill is in some respects, and belated though it is, we want to see action taken—which is why we co-operated in bringing the Bill before the House and why, despite our serious reservations, we will not oppose the timetable motion.

4.28 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): On an occasion such as this, there is bound to be a great deal of indignation—but I venture to suggest that much of it is false, because both main parties have pushed through guillotine motions on many previous occasions.

The Bill is important. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on acknowledging the problem, acting with speed, listening carefully to all interested parties, and bringing before the House quickly legislation that ought to command the support of most or all right hon. and hon. Members. I believe that the British public would also want to thank him.

I support the Bill and the guillotine motion. It is important to pass this legislation quickly. All right hon. and hon. Members will have been shocked and outraged by the reports we have read in recent weeks of attacks by dangerous dogs on children. My own constituency, in Croydon, is a typical built-up south London area. There is hardly a garden bigger than a tenth of an acre, and there are very few green spaces, yet far too many dangerous dogs are kept there.

There is no room in an urban area for rottweilers, pit bull terriers or any other such dogs. The owners deserve criticism; it is no kindness to the dogs to keep them in such a place. The pit bull terrier is an absolute menace, and the same goes for the rottweiler. Many of us——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should relate his remarks to the timetable motion. What I have heard of his speech would be more appropriate to a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Malins: Many of us have had correspondence from constituents recounting problems faced as a result of vicious attacks and urging us in Parliament to act with proper haste, Mr. Speaker.

Only this week, the local paper in Croydon carried an article setting out details of an especially vicious attack, and said that the Government should act with speed. There is undoubtedly public concern, and that means that we should legislate quickly.

Opposition Members ought to support the guillotine motion—[HON. MEMBERS: "We do."] If Opposition Members supported the guillotine motion, there would be no vote, and the matter would be dealt with quickly—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes. So sit down."] I shall sit down in a moment.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said in 1976 how useful guillotine motions were. He felt that, on the whole, speeches in the House were far too long. He said that speeches that lasted 45 minutes should be limited, and could often be cut down to five, 10 or 15 minutes.

A guillotine motion is suitable for the Bill, because it is relatively simple and short. The time that has been made available to debate it is entirely adequate—we have the better part of 10 to 12 hours' debate on a Bill of only eight clauses, and that is enough. In my years in the House I have often listened to speeches of 20, 30, 40 or 50 minutes which could easily have been finished in three, four or five minutes. If one has something sensible to say, one can say it very quickly—*[Interruption.]* I shall be doing that myself, although no doubt Opposition Members will think my speech neither simple nor good.

My father was a clergyman, and my mother used to say to him, "There has never been a bad short sermon." Until I started speaking today, one could have said that there had never been a bad short speech.

The Bill is simple and fairly straightforward. A combination of the public demand for action and the ability of all Members to make their points briefly and succinctly should mean that there is ample time to finish dealing with the Bill today. That is why I support the guillotine motion.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I formally move, That the Question be now put?

Mr. Speaker: Not at this juncture. We have a timetable motion in front of us.

4.33 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Like the other Members who have spoken in the debate, I am strongly in favour of swift action to deal with dangerous dogs. As my hon. Friends have explained and will no doubt explain further during the general discussion, we have been in favour of such action a good deal longer than the Conservative party. If proper attention had been paid to some Opposition speeches on the subject, the matter might already have been dealt with.

No doubt some of those earlier discussions, too, took place on guillotine motions. Some people will have said, "We have got to get the business through," and did not care what the arguments were. That is why a better decision was not made earlier—because the House did not listen properly.

I am also in favour of a House of Commons which is careful about passing any guillotine motions.

Mr. Bill Walker: You should know.

Mr. Foot: I certainly know, and I have told hon. Members who want those simple history lessons explained to them the reasons why there have been differences of view about the nature of guillotine motions. However, I have always made it clear that it would be dangerous for the House if we agreed to them. Governments would like it and more and more of them would be introduced in the extremely improper way that this one is being introduced today.

Even those hon. Members who recall those earlier occasions when I introduced some guillotine motions, will be able to recall easily the difference between them and the motion that the Leader of the House moved today. The Leader of the House knows very well that this measure was not included in the Conservative party manifesto. He knows very well that there has been no lengthy discussion of the issue previously. Therefore, the motion is very different from many earlier guillotine motions. All the motions that I properly put to the House and that it voted involved measures that had been extensively debated in the House and in the country, and I was asking for a decision. Even in those circumstances, I tried to urge the House to be very careful about proceeding with guillotine motions in a flippant manner. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) seemed to talk as though it did not much matter.

The simple question is whether we will get a good Bill to deal with this matter. One reason why some of us urge caution about guillotine motions is that a very bad measure may result. The more that discussion is abbreviated between Second Reading and the other processes of the Bill, and the less time that is made available for considering amendments which may be tabled from different parts of the House, the less likely one is to get a decent Bill in the end. Those of us who want a decent Bill to deal with the issue have every right to put that case now, and I support it.

This Government, of all Governments in our history, should be the most eager to recognise that argument. They should recognise that they have put more measures through the House under guillotine motions than any previous Government. Indeed, I think that they have tabled more guillotine motions than have all the previous Governments this century.

Mr. Dickens: The right hon. Gentleman holds the record.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman is as wrong with his arithmetic as he was in giving dancing lessons. I do not hold the record; it is held by the Government, who have introduced more guillotine motions than any Government in history. They should be a little careful, because some of the very Bills that were guillotined are the ones that are causing the greatest disturbance and trouble in the country today.

The Government pushed through the poll tax under a guillotine motion, and that is one reason why it is such a shoddy measure and they have had to withdraw it. Another example is the measure for dealing with so-called football hooligans that the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) mentioned—they have had to withdraw that. If they had listened a little more carefully, even though the Bill was being guillotined, they would have understood what was being said in the country and they would not have had to suffer that indignity. If only they had listened more carefully when the health service legislation was also forced through by guillotine.

The right hon. Gentleman and his predecessors forced through one guillotine motion after another, and four or five years later they had to come here and say that they had to review the legislation in question and take more parliamentary time to see whether they could do it a bit better. Now the Government are attempting to do it again, by methods and means that will rebound on them. Nobody is assured that the Government have a proper way of dealing with the problem.

I was not in the House when the Prime Minister made his announcement. I was at home because I was ill, but my

[Mr. Foot]

dog—dogs have a stronger telepathic sense than others—protested most strongly. When I woke up and discovered what was happening. I realised that he was protesting about the measures that were being introduced.

The Prime Minister made such a fool of himself on the matter. He said that he would act the next morning because he had all the means of doing so, but a fortnight later we discover that he will not carry out the measure that he threatened because, rightly, it must be subject to proper examination and discussion in the House.

The Leader of the House advanced a feeble case. He did not deal with the central question of how the Government will ensure that the Bill has a chance to be investigated and considered by people who know something about it. The Government, who have rejected proposals to deal with dogs more persistently than any other Government, say, "We shall abbreviate discussion; there will be no chance for representations to be made between Second and Third Reading and the passage of the Bill." That is a disgraceful way to treat the House.

The Bill will have serious defects and within a few months the Government will say to the House, "We have made a botch of this," just as they made a botch of the many measures that they pushed through under the guillotine.

I hope that the Leader of the House, even now, will listen to what hon. Members say. He was told that the House would accept a general measure because it is widely believed that there should be such a measure, and the more he understood that, the greater was the obligation on him to secure the general agreement of the House. If he tried to do that, he would get a better Bill than by rushing it through under the guillotine.

4.42 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, fairly, that there is a consensus in the House that action should be taken against dogs that risk lives or cause serious injury to human beings. We are united on that concept, but we must remember, too, the purposes of the House. As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot)—the former Leader of the Opposition—and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said, the House wants good legislation. We want to be able to attest to our electorates, first, that we have considered legislation appropriately and, secondly, that we have heard the arguments taken around the track.

The guillotine is moved in the context of a previous guillotine, which was designed to limit discussion on the point at issue today—the licensing of dangerous dogs. In the past, we were assured by the Government that that was not possible because of the difficulty of distinguishing between a pure breed and a mongrel. I do not wish to pursue the Government's difficulties in drafting the legislation, but I appreciate the point that they made recently, which no doubt will be repeated today, that this is extremely difficult legislation to draft correctly.

Having said that, I am concerned that, in one sense, the arguments that were adduced by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House were a bit of sophistry. He is saying that the imperative is such that, as dogs will be on heat in the summer months, the Bill must be passed before they have their day by the end of July.

Mr. Dickens: They are at it all year.

Mr. Shepherd: My understanding is that dogs are busy at it all the year round.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House believes that the Bill must be terminated by the end of July. Such arguments were adduced on the Football Spectators Bill. We were told that, unless it was enacted by a specific time, there would be mass murder on the terraces, and my party was drummed into supporting a guillotine motion to enact the Bill. Fortunately, the wisdom of Back Benchers, quietly spoken, was such that the Government acceded that the legislation may depend on the views of a judge. That is an outrageous way of approaching legislation. It does us great damage in the country and in the House and it does little credit to my party and to the Government, whom I support.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Despite my hon. Friend's criticisms, does he feel sufficiently strongly to divide the House on the timetable motion?

Mr. Shepherd: I am a Member of Parliament. I was elected by my constituents to argue causes, to put reasoned arguments, if I could, to listen to them and to judge as best as I am able. The imposition of a guillotine is wholly unwarranted and it could lead to bad clauses that cause much difficulty to us and to the reputation of the House. I shall most certainly oppose the guillotine motion, if I can find hon. Members willing to be Tellers.

With the assistance of the Clerks Office, which is always available to hon. Members, I am able to correct some misleading information that I was given. It touches on a concern about the use of the guillotine and I shall refer to how it has been used.

Between 1945 and 1950, there were three guillotines. Between 1950 and 1960, there were six guillotines. Between 1960 and 1970, there were 13 guillotines. In that quarter of a century—when the greatest social revolution of this century, the inception of the welfare state, occurred—we had a total of 22 guillotines.

Under my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), between 1970 and 1974, there were eight guillotines, and under Lords Wilson and Callaghan, between 1974 and 1979, there were 21 guillotines. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] My hon. Friends may say "Ah", but the horrors are yet to come.

In the 1970s, there were 29 guillotines. Under my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), we rose to a crescendo of respect for the House. Between 1979 and 1983, her first Government—in order to show that we were more productive that the Labour party—imposed 30 guillotines. Between 1983 and 1987, her second Government, which some would say was her most successful Administration, showed more caution and imposed only 10 guillotines. Her last Administration, between 1987 and November 1990, with the ill judgment of "guillotine-Jones" in the Whips Office, imposed 28 guillotines. Under the right hon. Lady's Government, we had a total of 66 guillotines.

There was a change of Government in 1990, and I wish the new Administration well. I had hoped that they would have learnt the lessons from the hubris that brought about

the nemesis. I regret that they have introduced two guillotines, of which this is the second, and both seem to have a new tendency. They are now used when the House seems to be of the same opinion—a new, unhappy and unsatisfactory development.

The first guillotine was imposed on the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991. I did not know many hon. Members who wanted to deny their citizens a £140 reduction in poll tax, yet a guillotine was used on the measure because urgency was considered a critical factor. The House also seems united on the central issue of curtailing dangerous dogs, and a guillotine has been introduced supposedly to ensure the good will of the House.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that, when an Opposition are faced with a large majority, their only weapon and tool is time? That being so, they keep the show on the road in Committee so that later clauses and amendments are not properly discussed and the Government ultimately have to apply a guillotine to get the legislation through the House. That does not apply to the legislation under discussion, because the Opposition have made it crystal clear that, although they are reluctant to do so, they will support the guillotine to further the Bill's progress. Therefore, the fewer speeches that are made the better.

Mr. Shepherd: In the end, we may need a guillotine. Unfortunately, this Government's predecessor, under my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley, used to introduce guillotines even before Second Reading. That leads me to a worrying point. Often, the processes of debate enable us to identify relevant issues. I gave the example of mongrels and I envisage that it will be difficult when I face a constituent with what looks like a brute, with the eyes and ears of an alsatian and a doberman pinscher, only to be told that it is a cross between a chihuahua and some other benign dog. No doubt my right hon. Friend —I was going to say Dr. Pangloss—the Secretary of State for the Home Department will be able to steer us cautiously through the difficult tests involved.

The 21st edition of "Erskine May"—in which standards have slipped—states that guillotine motions

"may be regarded as the extreme limit to which procedure goes in affirming the rights of the majority at the expense of the minorities of the House, and it cannot be denied that they are capable of being used in such a way as to upset the balance, generally so carefully preserved"—

although the evidence of recent years is that the balance has not been carefully preserved—

"between the claims of business, and the rights of debate."

We are citizens representing other citizens and all that we can do is attest that our fellow citizens bear what we are passing as legislation.

Burke's general injunction is a fair one, which we, as Conservatives, should remember. A majority does not simply mean the total number of Members divided by two plus one, but involves the processes by which we achieve that majority. It is terribly important that we enable everyone to make comments and observations on the details and difficulties of legislation. At best, we aim for consent and, at the very least, we aim for acquiescence. Too much of the legislation that has been drummed through the House has reflected to the disadvantage of the Conservative party, my hon. Friends and the Government whom I support.

Let us consider the crescendo reached in 1988 when there were 13 guillotines in the course of a year, including those used on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, the Water Act 1989 and the Official Secrets Act 1989, on which we had a three-hour guillotine motion to decide on a one-hour debate. Ministers were no longer able to explain the provisions of their own Acts. Let us consider the nadir, involving the Home Secretary's original proposition—the poll tax. If Ministers had allowed a debate, they might have realised where the sensitivities of the arguments lay and we might have obtained better legislation or even done away with the central principle. In that lamentable year, the Football Spectators Act 1989 required two guillotines and is now an ineffective piece of legislation. Did we serve our interests well?

The arguments adduced by the Leader of the House did him no credit and showed that he knew none of the history and had no sympathy with what is happening. The House should pause to reflect that, from the three guillotines necessary between 1945 and 1951—when there was a huge social revolution and great changes—the number has risen to give an incredible assault of guillotines, rising to the crescendo of 13 in 1988. Can we honestly say that the quality of legislation and our arguments in the Chamber are better now?

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The hon. Gentleman must agree that the use of this guillotine is different: if we do not do something today, we shall have to do something tomorrow or the week after. Something must be done to protect the people in our communities.

Mr. Shepherd: It is fair for the hon. Gentleman to raise the fact that the issue under discussion is very much alive. Something must be done to stop these horrific incidents happening. I accept the general contention of his argument, but legislating in haste often means repenting at leisure, and the purpose of our parliamentary processes is to safeguard the quality of the rule of law. If it is discussed in a proper parliamentary fashion, legislation is more likely to have merit, stand the test of time and better meet the needs of the electorate. If that takes a day or two longer, it is the price that we must pay.

We were assured that the Football Spectators Act had to go through quickly because, if it were not dealt with swiftly under the injunction of a guillotine, hundreds if not thousands of people would be killed in football grounds. Fortunately, that dire prophecy did not come about. The Football Spectators Act is not functioning, because a judge decided that it should not do so, but it is on the statute book. Would it not have been better if we had paced our discussions on that legislation and taken note of the recommendations in the judge's report, which have now been implemented and which contained proposals that had the support of the entire House?

I had not intended to speak for so long, but I feel fiercely about the abuse of parliamentary procedure. A guillotine motion involves the denial of free speech—that is the bottom line. We have enough difficulties in the House because, with 650 Members, it is difficult to catch Mr. Speaker's eye on matters of great import to the country. Perhaps there are too many of us. Today, we are imposing a guillotine motion on legislation on which the House has the ability to reflect.

4.57 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): What a good speech. The House will have listened with great respect to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and recognised in the hon. Gentleman someone who is prepared to defend the liberties of the House and of our people, not only by words but by actions. He is right to be prepared to vote against the motion tonight, and he will certainly have the support of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Lobby if he chooses to exercise that right.

It is not good enough simply to say, as did the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), that the matter has been handled badly and incompetently. He was right —it has been handled with the incompetence which is becoming a characteristic of the declining years of the Conservative Administration. But if the Government are so incompetent, cannot we as a House do something to restore order into the consideration of our legislation? Cannot we exercise the power of discussion with Ministers about how Bills should be timetabled to enable them to pass through the House in accordance not only with Ministers' perception of what is needed but in accordance with our perception of what is necessary to hold a proper debate?

At issue is not only our amour propre as Members of Parliament, but the ability of the people we represent to make their views known. We are not discussing merely the broad principle of acting speedily to determine how to deal with attacks by so-called dangerous breeds, but how the language of the law will improve the situation.

The difficulty with the Minister's approach is that he takes his gesturing at the Dispatch Box for sufficiency of argument. The reality is that the courts will have to consider the language of the eight clauses. Some 21 amendments or new clauses are to be considered tonight, and some are of great importance. Some of them may make or mar the effectiveness of the Bill.

Mr. Budgen: The hon. Gentleman referred to the courts. Does he agree that, in recent years, the doctrine of judicial review has been extended, and that, to a large extent, that is because the courts recognise that Parliament does not carry out sufficiently its duty of properly considering the detail of legislation? As a result of procedures such as the motion today, the courts are taking from Parliament some of the powers that are really parliamentary.

Mr. Maclennan: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I welcome the extension of judicial review, because I recognise the defects of the legislative process. Constitutional arrangements for the scrutiny of Bills, even when there is broad bipartisan support for the measure, as there is in this case, are wholly inadequate and produce a statute book that is a disgrace. That statute book leads to uncertainty in the law and frequently has to be amended by further legislation in areas that have been precisely, although not adequately, considered by Parliament a short time before, as is the case with the Bill.

During the passage of the Environmental Protection Bill and in 1988, there were opportunities to put right the matters that we seek to put right today. The Home Secretary and the Leader of the House sloughed off such considerations. The urgency arises from an earlier dereliction of Government duty and from inadequate attention to the detail of what was proposed by sensible people outside the House who have direct experience of dealing with the problems of dangerous dogs and other dogs. If the voices of, for example, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had been listened to —never mind the voices of the political parties, or the many dissenting voices in the Conservative party—we should have had substantially better legislation.

The Government have been in office for too long. The right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), when Prime Minister, said that she thought that it was appropriate to dispense with argument within Cabinet. Her view was, "Why waste time listening to different points of view?" She told her colleagues that she wanted action. She said that she wanted only one or two like-minded people around her with whom to decide what would happen. She believed that matters would sometimes be decided in Cabinet Committee and sometimes in corners. That view has now been translated from No. 10 Downing street to the House of Commons. We are being asked to behave like a rubber stamp.

The motion has not been tabled in the interests of speed. We should have accommodated the necessary speed if we had been asked and if there had been any discussion. That was not the approach. There were no questions about how to accommodate the necessity for speed. The precise amount of time through the middle of the night which will be devoted to the whole of the Bill has been slapped down on the Order Paper.

The simplicity of the subject may be deceptive. I do not believe that, because the Bill has only eight clauses, it is an easy Bill. It contains matters of considerable contention. What is the real reason for having the central debate about the effectiveness of dog control, which will turn on the question of registration, in the middle of the night? I venture to predict that the Press Gallery will be almost empty when that debate takes place. Registration will not be reported in the first or even the later editions of the press tomorrow. If some Conservative Members decide to speak out against some of the provisions, the Government's discomfort will be covered up to an extent. That is not what Parliament is about. Dissenting voices should be free not only to speak but to be heard. They should not be wrapped up in a debate in the middle of the night when most sensible people are in their beds.

If the public have a view about the way in which we handle matters, they think nothing of debates in the middle of the night. They think that we are pretty close to insane to discuss serious matters in the middle of the night when there are two weeks of time ahead of us. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) was right. She has her ear to the ground. I have never met a constituent who was prepared to defend the idiocy of late-night debates. The fact that the Government force through guillotine motions is not a sign of strength; it is a sign of weakness. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends object to Parliament being treated in that way. Although we agree with the substance of the Bill, we wholly disagree with the Government's handling of it, and we will vote accordingly.

5.5 pm

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) both spoke against the timetable motion.

I take the opportunity to express my support for it. I shall do so briefly in view of the obvious cross-party support on the matter.

I welcome the Bill and I believe that it was right to introduce a guillotine motion to ensure that it becomes law as quickly as possible. Most of my constituents want the Bill to become law as quickly as possible. In the past two years, the House has discussed the regulation of dog ownership on many occasions. The fear caused by dangerous dogs has been an issue on which many of our constituents have expressed great anxiety. In my experience, it has caused more letters to flow into our postbags than any other matter, with the possible exception of what should be done about the welfare of pigs.

The public anxieties have become acute following recent attacks, with which we are all familiar and which have been highly publicised by the press. News of the planned importation of huge fighting dogs from Japan has also worried the public, and not surprisingly. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) said earlier, we should not underestimate how frightened some people are by the dogs living in their street. The Government are right to do something about that, and it is right that it should be done before the House rises for the summer recess.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Question Time on 21 May:

"it is clear that such dogs have no place in our homes."

The Leader of the Opposition replied:

"I strongly support what the Prime Minister just said about fighting dogs."—[*Official Report*, 21 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 776.]

With that unusual degree of political consensus, it should be possible to pass a relatively simple and well-balanced measure with the considerable speed that the public have every right to expect.

For a number of reasons, I believe that it is entirely appropriate to introduce a timetable motion. The first and most important reason is that the provisions governing the ownership of fighting dogs need to be introduced as soon as possible so that further attacks, such as the attack on Rucksana Khan in Bradford, are avoided. The sooner the Bill is passed, the sooner the 30 November deadline is clear and the sooner the offence of dogs being dangerously out of control applies, the sooner it will be necessary under the law to muzzle and leash dangerous fighting dogs. What would our constituents think if we were to dilly-dally and shilly-shally, taking days or weeks to debate a short Bill and spending much of our time debating matters such as the registration of all dogs, which is peripheral to the problem in any case? What would they think if, during that time, there were further attacks which might have been prevented? We have a duty to put the measure on the statute book as soon as possible.

Mr. Budgen: Surely our constituents would understand that, if the Bill does not come into effect until 30November, there is plenty of time to have a decent interval between Second Reading and Committee stage? That would allow those who feel that they may be treated unjustly to make representations about Second Reading. It is all very well to say that our constituents want this legislation to be bashed through, but they understand that passing legislation is not a matter of knocking things through a sausage machine. Rather, it involves trying to evoke some consent among those who may be affected by legislation.

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) had better have another look at the Bill. He will then discover that some clauses will come into effect immediately the Bill is enacted. My colleagues on the Front Bench will correct me if I am wrong about that. The provisions relating to muzzling and leashing will come into force on enactment. Throughout the summer it is important that the public are reassured that such a provision exists and that dangerous dogs on our streets are muzzled and leashed. Such provisions should be introduced straight away.

Another reason why we should approve the timetable motion is that there are only six or seven weeks left before the summer recess. We should not let the Bill rest in limbo over the summer recess and enact it in October or November. There is sufficient cross-party agreement that urgent action should be taken to justify a timetable that will lead to Royal Assent before the summer.

Finally, we should approve the timetable motion because the Bill is relatively straightforward. The more complex far-reaching matters that some of my hon. Friends and others would like to add to the Bill have already been debated exhaustively during this Parliament. The Bill will, in effect, eventually make pit bull terriers extinct in Britain, but it will do so in a relatively humane and considered way. There is overwhelming support in the House for that proposition. In the meantime, those dogs must be muzzled and leashed in public places. There is overwhelming support for that proposition, too.

The Bill also creates a new offence of permitting a dog of any breed

"to be dangerously out of control in a public place".

There is overwhelming support for that proposal. The Bill also gives my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the power to extend the provisions of the legislation to other breeds of dog not specifically mentioned in it. There must be overwhelming support for that provision as well. Almost every feature of the Bill commands widespread support.

The difference between hon. Members rests on whether a registration scheme for all dogs should be added to the Bill. I an not in favour of an all-embracing registration scheme. We are considering the problem of dangerous dogs. I do not believe that it will help us deal with dangerous dogs to insist on the registration of every spaniel, Scottie or chihuahua in the land. Whatever we think about the merits of such an idea, the continuing debate about is should not be allowed to obstruct and delay the passage of this Bill. It is therefore right to allocate a fixed time for the debate about registration.

No one can claim that the House is not fully familiar with every debating point, representation, argument and nuance for and against a registration scheme. To my recollection, we have voted on the idea three times in the past two years and this timetable motion will allow another vote. We do not need to spend many hours rehearsing arguments with which every hon. Member must be extremely familiar. Moreover, in all probability there will be a further vote on a registration scheme if the other place inserts a requirement for such a scheme, so no one

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can say that the proposed rapid passage of the Bill prevents the House from passing judgment on that related but different matter.

The Bill provides for a range of measures which, I believe——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman must refer to the allocation of time motion. I am afraid that he is making a Second Reading speech.

Mr. Hague: I have advanced arguments in favour of the timetable motion, which makes it possible to place a highly desirable measure on the statute book before the summer recess. The issues that other people would like to debate more extensively have already been exhaustively debated both within and outside the House. We know that we need to act, and we should do so tonight.

5.13 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I was surprised that the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), who clearly favours the Bill and the timetable motion, should tell us at great length why we should approve the motion. That might have happened more quickly had he not bothered to speak.

I am opposed to the timetable motion and the procedure by which the Bill will be passed in the short space of time that the Government are proposing. The Bill is knee-jerk legislation. If a pit bull terrier or a rottweiler was hanging on to one's ankle, that might be a very good reason to jerk one's knee.

I imagine that there is support inside the House and in the country at large for the central measure in the Bill. However, this is not a national emergency, nor is it an issue about which we need to take such a quick decision. We need decisive action, but the Opposition have been urging the Government to take action for well over 12 months. Only after the popular newspapers carried pictures of the Home Secretary on their front pages and demanded that he stop dithering, and only because the Prime Minister wants to act decisively after being accused of dithering all the time, do we see legislation rushed through the House.

The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) made a principled speech and that makes him one of the most endangered species on the Conservative Benches. As he said, as a result of this timetable motion we are likely to get bad legislation. There is agreement across the House about the need to deal with fighting dogs and there is no question of the Opposition trying to trip up the Government or to talk the measure out or delay it. That is all the more reason why we should approach the issue in a measured way.

The best way to achieve that would have been to have a normal Second Reading today and then a Standing Committee stage and then to return to the House. There could have been an agreement between the two sides through the official channels about an unofficial timetable. That would have been all right because we are not trying to stop the legislation. However, the timetable motion is an insult to the House and we will end up with bad legislation. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will not be able to consider all the nuances proposed in the Bill. No doubt, if more consideration was given to that, hon. Members would be more informed.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the really important gap of time is that between Second Reading and the Committee stage? It is not just hon. Members who want to consider the Bill's principle. The Government have changed their mind on several occasions and it is important that the various interested parties, some of which are in the minority, should be able to consider the Bill and make representations to their Members of Parliament. Hon. Members do not encompass the whole wisdom of the nation; nor do the Government. If we are to be a proper representative body, we must hear the representations of the people and consider them between Second Reading and Committee. It is wholly unnecessary to introduce legislation in this way. It makes a mockery of the House and it gives the impression that the Government are acting in an ill-considered way.

Mr. Banks: On this occasion, I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. He repeated some of the points that I have made. I said that we should have a Second Reading debate today and then have a Committee stage which would not last very long, but which would at least enable hon. Members to consider the Bill in detail.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said that the Government have already changed their position on several occasions. If I remember correctly, the first proposal to emerge from the Home Secretary was the destruction of all pit bull terriers. That was met by a great cry of outrage from hon. Members on both sides of the House and from responsible pit bull terrier owners. The owners wanted to know why their dogs should be destroyed. I believe that there is no such thing as an irresponsible dog, only an irresponsible owner. If we had rushed legislation through at that stage, who knows what would have been enshrined in it? I have received a great wodge of letters about this from my constituents and they are still pouring in. I should like to be able to consider those letters and raise issues in Committee—if I was lucky enough to be a member of a Committee. Most owners of those dogs would not consider the way in which we are approaching the matter as a responsible way for the House to conduct its business.

The timetable motion is inappropriate, unnecessary and undemocratic, as many such motions are. I am disappointed that the Opposition Front Bench will not force a vote on the timetable motion. However, as I understand from my very good friend on the Front Bench, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), if there is to be a free vote, I shall be in the Division Lobby opposing the timetable motion.

5.19 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I support the timetable motion. I have some sympathy with the argument of my hon. Friend for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). I too, agree that excessive use of the timetable procedure cannot ultimately be conducive to good parliamentary Government and can also be counter-productive.

Equally, I understand the argument of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who spoke against excessive use of the guillotine procedure. His

words would have had slightly more credibility had he not been such an enthusiastic user of the procedure when he was in Government.

I agree with the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) that it is curious, to say the least, that we are to debate such matters at three or four o'clock in the morning. However, that comment relates less to the use of the timetable procedure and more to the need for reform of parliamentary procedures which seem to be mooted in theory but rarely proposed by the Leader of the House or his shadow counterpart.

We have an obligation to move forward quickly with the Bill. There is no doubt that we have bipartisan support for the principles in the Bill and support within the country not only for producing it but for getting on with it very quickly.

As the father of a son aged four and as the previous owner of bull mastiffs, mastiffs and Irish wolfhounds, I understand that there is a necessity for legislation that not only deals with fighting dogs but allows muzzling powers so that magistrates can deal with large or potentially threatening dogs that may cause problems for parents with young children. It is significant that the Metropolitan police say that, out of 468 dog attacks on human beings in 1990, no fewer than 111 were committed by American pit bull terriers. Any responsible Government would need to introduce such legislation.

Mr. Winnick: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the issue is not that such dogs are dangerous and that measures must be taken to deal with them? That is not likely to divide the House of Commons. The issue is the manner in which we debate and decide on legislation. If, for example, the original proposals had been put before us in a Bill to slaughter dogs—that may be right or wrong; we have our own views—no doubt the hon. Gentleman would make the same speech as he is making now. There has been time for some reflection. All that we are saying is that, between Second Reading and Committee, there should be some time for the House of Commons perhaps even to strengthen the measure along the lines that the hon. Gentleman mentions. In some respects, the measure is not as strong as some of us would like. All that we are asking is that the House of Commons give due consideration to the measure.

Mr. Coombs: Given the consensus behind the legislation, any responsible Government should ensure not only that the measure proceeds as quickly as possible to protect innocent people but that it proceeds at all. The shadow Leader of the House said, "Yes, we will deliver on a guillotine motion." Several hon. Members than said that they would not support it. If we did not have a guillotine motion, there is a strong possibility that the measure would be filibustered out of existence, and therefore an important piece of legislation would not reach the statute book.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend please answer one point? One of the most dangerous occasions is when the House of Commons and its Front Benches appear to agree. One of our duties as Members of Parliament from time to time is to put forward unpopular views and to ensure that the House considers them. It is very authoritarian and dangerously populist to say that, simply because the consensus in the House is in favour of something, the proper process of consideration and debate should be truncated. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will have a very distinguished ministerial future. However, is there not still, however despicable, some role for Back-Bench Members of Parliament from time to time to put forward minority views?

Mr. Coombs: I would agree with my hon. Friend if the timetable motion did not genuinely give enough time for debating what is in the Bill. The trouble is that, without a timetable motion, as my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) said, we would spend most of our time debating what is not in the Bill, and that is a dog registration scheme. For that reason, there is adequate time for developing the arguments that we need to develop and to propose an important piece of legislation that will save lives and prevent children from being disfigured, because that is what it is all about.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I hear the hon. Gentleman's arguments for the timetable motion. If he casts his mind back to the previous Session, he may remember the Broadcasting Act 1990 and its various stages. There were 165 clauses, I think, and heaven knows how many amendments. Although we fiercely opposed what the Government are doing, there was no guillotine.

Mr. Coombs: There was no guillotine because hon. Members on both sides were committed to acting in a way that addressed the issues in the Bill rather than issues that were not in it. As a result, there was a consensus that the Bill should be on the statute book within a certain time. In this case, if we did not have the guillotine, we would find that hon. Members in favour of dog registration—let us face it, they already have three out of five hours to consider that subject in Committee, at whatever hour of day or night it may be—would frustrate the consensus of Parliament and of the vast majority of people to introduce this legislation. We saw a hint of that this afternoon. In view of their avowed aim to frustrate the legislation, the guillotine motion is not only necessary but desirable, and I support it.

5.27 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I make it abundantly clear that those of us who are critical of the guillotine motion support the Bill. We want to extend it and make it more effective. We do not want to make it less effective; we want to improve it. We are all subject to the pressures of our constituents, and quite rightly so. The accident involving Rucksana Khan occurred within a mile and a half of where I live in Bradford. It is not a question of wanting to oppose the Bill, talk it out or generally sabotage it. In any case, if the Government felt that there was the slightest hint of that, they have plenty of Members such as the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) to come to the House for a closure motion, to maintain the required 100 hon. Members, and get the measure through. There is no question about that.

Reference has been made to 1976 and my saying that guillotines were desirable to cut out debate. We were in an entirely different situation. We had a minority Labour Government and we were being harried by an Opposition who had recovered from the shock of an election defeat and were proving to be extremely effective. If anybody asks me about the pattern of behaviour that I follow in this Parliament to try to stop Conservative Government legislation, I will tell them that I follow the pattern of

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behaviour of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) when he was in opposition and supported by the late Ian Gow. At that time, they were harrying us very successfully.

However, I have changed my mind to a considerable degree about guillotines. Debate helps to improve legislation. As I have been in the House for 14 years, I do not believe that it is a criminal offence to say that that process can improve legislation.

Mr. Budgen: I support the hon. Gentleman's point. At least it can be said about those measures that were got through under the guillotine by the then Labour Government that, in broad outline, they had been considered by the electorate at the preceding general election. The great criticism of this measure is that it has been thought up quickly, that the central argument has been changed at least twice—some say, three times—and that there has been little public debate about the principle of the Bill on Second Reading. I am proud to have voted against the guillotines introduced by the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Foot), but this Bill is the weakest possible case for a guillotine.

Mr. Cryer: I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's view, but I was clarifying my position. I am flattered that people look up the speeches that I made in 1976, so I want to make my position clear—that I do not apply double standards, something that I hope all hon. Members are concerned about. Moreover, this Government have an overall majority of 100 and a majority of 150 over the Labour party.

The guillotine allows three hours for Second Reading. We might be able to add on a little bit, if the guillotine debate does not take up the full three hours. There is pressure on us to do that so that we can add on few extra minutes to the miserly three hours that have been allowed for Second Reading. The two new clauses that deal with a dog registration scheme will not be debated at any hour, as the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) said. They will be debated between 10 pm and 1 am. Three hours, under the guillotine, have been allowed for a very important principle.

The Leader of the House says that there has been plenty of time for debating a dog registration scheme. Time was indeed devoted to debating the subject. The House decided that there should be a dog registration scheme. However, due to the Government's reservations in 1988, they inserted a clause in the Local Government Bill that provided that a dog registration scheme may—not shall —be introduced. That clause has not been implemented.

The new clause 1 and new clause 5 debates, between 10 pm and 1 am, will give me the opportunity to say that, if Ministers had implemented the decision of this House in 1988, in all probability Rucksana Khan would not have been attacked by an American pit bull terrier in that grossly savage and intensely disfiguring way. However, they did not do so. I do not intend to develop that theme, because we are debating whether there should be a guillotine. The argument has many ramifications, but we have been given insufficient time to follow them up. New clause 1 and new clause 5 are to be considered in Committee, when they ought to be dealt with in great detail.

A crucial element is the classification of dogs. Between 1 am and 3 am—two hours—the House is to consider a total of nine groups of amendments, chosen by Mr. Speaker. That does not work out at very many minutes each. They include amendments to cover breeds such as rottweilers. The majority of serious dog attacks mean that people have to be taken to hospital with massive injuries. During the last three months, one person has lost his life as a result of such an attack. He was attacked, however, not by a pit bull terrier but by an alsatian. We ought to be given sufficient time in which to consider how the Secretary of State's powers can be extended to include all types of dogs that potentially can cause harm to human beings. The first group of amendments out of the nine that are to be debated during that period of two hours is devoted to that subject. We know how long that subject could take up.

Mr. Hind: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's point very carefully. In the light of what he has said, does he not think that it is time to end this debate now and deal with the substantive issues before the House?

Mr. Cryer: That is an example of the way in which the guillotine brings pressure to bear on the House of Commons. It is outrageous. I wish the hon. Gentleman had said that when we debated the measure that introduced the poll tax. Had he done so, the embarrassment in which his party is now shrouded would have been considerably reduced.

May I deal with a few of the other items in the nine groups of amendments that we are to consider in that two hours? I refer to the conditions in which potentially dangerous dogs are kept and also to the question of affirmative orders. I tabled that amendment because it would provide greater accountability to the House if more orders were subject to the affirmative rather than to the negative resolution procedure. I am the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. It is a minority occupation and the media do not give much publicity to the work of that Committee. However, it does important work, and I should like to explain why I believe that orders should be subject to the affirmative rather than the negative resolution procedure. However, due to the guillotine, the likelihood is that we shall not have time to discuss that amendment.

The Home Secretary recognises that there will not be enough time under the guillotine, because he has not devoted time and attention in the House of Commons to discussing these orders. However, when he announced that he intended to introduce the Bill at a press conference, he devoted a considerable time to outlining the way in which the orders that the Bill gives him the power to make will operate. I regard it as a very great pity that he did not bother to consult the House when elaborating on what the orders should cover. That would have enlightened our discussions. Although the Bill is supported by the Opposition, the fact that the Government have decided to impose a guillotine, in conjunction with the Home Secretary's elaboration of these matters when speaking to the press but not to us, shows remarkable contempt for this House.

The last matter that is to be debated within those two hours is new clause 3, which deals with an application to the Criminal Inujuries Compensation Board when somebody is injured by a dog whose owner cannot be traced. That is not an unreasonable new clause. It is an

important matter for that minority of people who may find themselves in that position. The House should show reasonable care for minorities, but almost certainly we shall not reach new clause 3, due to the guillotine.

The guillotine is misplaced. It has been criticised by both sides of the House. I hope that the House will vote against it and will register the fact that the House feels deeply unhappy about the way in which the Government have abused the Opposition, who time and again have said that they were willing to help and co-operate. There should be a demonstration about the Bill so that, when the Bill turns out to be a dog's dinner and the Government have to produce amending legislation, they cannot turn around and say, "You failed to vote against the guillotine."

Mr. Budgen: Would not any decent Opposition have opposed the guillotine?

Mr. Cryer: That is what we are doing.

Mr. Budgen: I accept that. If one takes Mr. Disraeli's dictum that it is the duty of an Opposition to oppose——

Mr. Skinner: We do not need Disraeli to tell us how to oppose. He was a Tory.

Mr. Budgen: I dare say the Opposition do not. It is a rotten day for the Opposition if they cannot muster a vote against a guillotine of this sort.

Mr. Cryer: I would not entirely share that view. Members of the Opposition have different views, but the Government will find that the Opposition are working well today.

5.40 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I shall be brief. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) clearly demonstrated my reason for saying that one should support the Government's guillotine motion. If Ministers had tried to reach an accommodation of views so that the Bill could be passed in time to meet the requirements, which were clearly spelt out by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, there is no doubt that the Labour Whips could not have delivered. That is the experience in this Parliament. That is why I believe that it is right to pass the guillotine motion. The Opposition say that they can agree something, but it rarely happens—one need only examine Scottish business to see that.

5.41 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I came into the Chamber feeling that, although the guillotine motion was not necessary—I intervened during the speech of the Leader of the House—I would probably go along with it. I have changed my mind. I shall vote against the motion as, I hope, will other hon. Members.

I have no doubt that action is necessary to deal with the dogs in question. On that issue, there is no dispute between the two sides of the House. Hon. Members rarely agree that legislation is necessary. Few, if any, Conservative Members would argue that legislation is not necessary to deal with these dogs—although I do not know the view of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). There is a consensus.

Perhaps I should not admit this in the House of Commons—one should never admit to any form of cowardice—but I suppose that I have spent most of my life in fear of some dogs. I imagine that I am not in a minority of one. I have the greatest sympathy with postmen who have to deliver letters regardless of ferocious dogs. I am a dog lover, and I should not like people in my constituency to think otherwise.

Is the guillotine motion necessary or desirable? Governments, whether they have a large majority or not, introduce guillotine motions because they fear filibustering and delay, and the actions of Members who oppose controversial legislation. That is part of the House of Commons, and there is no reason to apologise for it. It is the job of hon. Members—certainly of the Opposition—to oppose controversial legislation.

There is a consensus on this necessary Bill. It is unlikely that any hon. Member will filibuster to delay it. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that no one who sees on television the injuries inflicted on a child by a dog could doubt that action is necessary. If there is any criticism of the Government, it is that action was not taken earlier.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): It took two years.

Mr. Winnick: Indeed. If action had been taken, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South said, a child might not have been injured. Bearing in mind what has happened to people, particularly children, the Bill is certainly necessary.

The Bill could be better if the House of Commons had sufficient time to debate matters, rather than rushing it through as the guillotine motion intends. Why could we not have had a two-day debate? Why have controversy over the guillotine motion when it could have been avoided if the Government had said, "Here is a two-day debate and the House has agreed that action is necessary"? Instead, once again, we have a typical Government guillotine motion.

At the risk of repeating what others have said, I should have thought that, given other Bills which have been guillotined—particularly the poll tax Bill—and which have been shown to be totally wrong, the Government would be reluctant, to say the least, to have a guillotine on this subject, especially when there is general agreement that action is necessary.

I am one of those Members who have changed their minds. One rarely admits that in the House. We listen to a debate and make up our minds accordingly, and I have done so. Several hon. Members, not least the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), have persuaded me that it would be wrong to go ahead with the motion. For that reason, a number of us will go into the Division Lobby to express our view in the usual way in which we oppose motions with which we disagree.

5.46 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I shall speak briefly because, like other hon. Members, I wish to move on to the substantive motion. I wish to make one point to correct the central thesis of the speech by the Leader of the House which was echoed by the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), who is not now in his place—having read the speech put into his hand, the hon. Gentleman has left the Chamber.

I wish to make it clear that the argument for the guillotine, which is based on the need to complete

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consideration of the Bill today and tomorrow morning, is wholly false. Had there not been a guillotine, I have no doubt that the Bill would have concluded all its stages today. There would have been a good chance that it would have concluded all its stages more quickly. The only difference is that we would have had sensible consideration of difficult points.

The arithmetic is obvious. Had we not spent three hours on the guillotine——

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Not for the moment.

Had we not spent three hours on the guillotine, as we shall, the Second Reading debate would have begun at 3.30 pm. I have no doubt that that debate could have been concluded, by arrangement, some time before 10 pm. We would then have gone on to registration. The hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), who is also not in his place, does not seem to understand that point, but it is relevent to the Bill. The prepared speech which was put in his hand persuaded him to suggest that the Bill was entirely about tosas and pit bull terriers——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is characteristically over-enthusiatic. If he will contain himself and be patient, I promise that he will have a moment before I finish.

The hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks talked as though the Bill was entirely concerned with pit bull terriers and tosas, but many of the clauses deal with dogs in general. I urge Government business managers who prepare speeches for Back Benchers to do the job more accurately.

Had we not spent three hours on the guillotine motion, we should have got on to registration well before 10 o'clock. Almost certainly, we would not have taken three hours to discuss that. We should then have gone on, in some of the small hours of the morning, to discuss amendments in Committee. The Bill would have been considered more quickly. The only difference would be that we would have come to a vote on registration not in the small hours of the morning but at a reasonable time of night when Conservative Members condescended to be here and when the newspapers reported our deliberations.

To maintain the equilibrium of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, I now give way to him.

Mr. Budgen: On reflection, does not the right hon. Gentleman feel rather ashamed of the Opposition? Is it not the duty of the Opposition to oppose and, in opposing, to uphold the minority interest and give it an opportunity to be heard? In their anxiety to pander to what they believe to be the overwhelming public view, are not the Opposition denying the rights of the minority, which should be preserved by parliamentary procedure?

Mr. Hattersley: The slogan about it being the duty of the Opposition to oppose is the most trivial view of politics that it is possible to imagine. It is the duty of the Opposition to support those things in which they believe and to oppose those things with which they disagree. As I am basically in agreement with the contents of the Bill and I am anxious to get on to a proper discussion of it, I propose to sit down so that the Home Secretary can make an equally brief speech and we can begin to spend our time doing something worth while instead of making the House look ridiculous, as this guillotine motion has done.

5.49 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I sense that the feeling of the House is to move to a decision on the motion—*[Interruption.]* I notice that the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) have been snapping and snarling throughout the debate. Snapping and snarling is not unparliamentary, but such behaviour comes under the description in the Bill of being

"dangerously out of control in a public place".

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will be lucky not to fall within the provisions of clause 3.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall continue, if I may, because I wish to reply to the debate briefly. It would be a discourtesy if I did not reply to the points that have been raised. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins), for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) for their support for the timetable motion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and I have been involved in many debates on major Bills and in their Committee stages during the past 10 or 12 years and he knows that I respect his views. He spoke on the grounds of constitutional propriety in which he has always believed. He has opposed not only this guillotine, but all guillotines and has never been afraid to express that view both in opposition and in government.

I was a little more surprised by the views of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). That was a case of a Daniel come to judgment. Those of us who have been Members of the House for some years may remember the day when five tumbrils were summoned to the foot of the guillotine by the trumpet that he blew. Now, however, he is against all guillotines. I suppose that evening brings repentance.

I should like to repeat a point made earlier by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. The real problem is that we have had to act quickly on pit bull terriers, the tosa and other clause 1 dogs. The public demand such action and Members in all parts of the House accept the need for it. I am glad that the Opposition have said that they will support us in that, and I am grateful for their support. I do not need to emphasise to the House the importance of getting such legislation onto the statute book, our aim being to make the Bill law by the end of July.

In an uncharacteristically misinformed intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) expressed the belief that the Bill would come into force on 30 November. Several important measures will, however, be implemented from 31 July, such as the muzzling of pit bull terriers, and the ban on their breeding and their being given or exchanged.

Mr. Budgen: Even with the first part of the Bill coming into effect on 31 July, there would still be time for a proper gap between Second Reading and Committee stage.

Mr. Baker: On such matters, I must take the advice of the managers of Government business. Their clear advice was that, if the Bill is to proceed to the House of Lords, it must finish its passage through this House by the end of this week. I have some sympathy with the feelings of those hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Bradford, South and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who have said that we should debate several of these matters at greater length. However, it is ironic that even in this debate on the guillotine motion, in which the Opposition Front Bench have said, "We will co-operate and we will not vote against you," in the two hours in which we have debated the motion, several Opposition Members have said, "No, we shall not accept that advice." I do not criticise that attitude—it is the prerogative of hon. Members—but it is none the less a reflection of the fact that it is difficult to contain debates, especially on such difficult matters.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way to him. The House wishes to move on to Second Reading and he and I will spend much of the rest of the evening debating these matters, in which I know that he has a particular interest.

I very much hope that we can now proceed with the Second Reading debate. It is important that we do so. There is no question of the Government wishing to avoid a vote or debate on the question of registration. Such a debate and vote is inevitable whenever the question of dogs arises. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hatterlsey) asked about that in our short discussion and I said that I would ensure that we could have such a debate and vote under any procedures that were introduced. The guillotine motion allows for that to take place first.

No hon. Member has been more eloquent than the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) who intervened twice to say that the country expects nothing less than that we proceed with this matter—he used the word "immediately"—so that the Bill can pass through this House tomorrow. I agree with him.

Question put:—

The House divides: Ayes 280, Noes 56.

Division No. 160] **[5.55 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David

Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Douglas, Dick
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hardy, Peter
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Patchett, Terry
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sillars, Jim
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved.

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Dangerous Dogs Bill—

Second Reading

1. The proceedings on Second Reading shall be completed at this day's sitting and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

Committee

2. (1) In Committee, proceedings on any new Clauses relating to the registration of dogs shall be taken before proceedings on the Clauses.

(2) Proceedings in Committee on new Clauses relating to the registration of dogs shall be brought to a conclusion at 1 a.m. at this day's sitting.

(3) The remaining proceedings in Committee shall be completed at this day's sitting and shall be brought to a conclusion at 3 a.m.

Report and Third Reading

3. The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading shall be completed at this day's sitting and shall be brought to a conclusion at 4 a.m.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

4. On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill, as amended, without any Question being put.

Order of proceedings

5. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration are taken.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings at this day's sitting shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

7. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings at this day's sitting.

Conclusion of proceedings

8.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order at this day's sitting.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) If a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings which, under this Order are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

9.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If at this day's sitting the House is adjourned, or if this day's sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this

Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

10. Nothing in this Order shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommital

11.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages, respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommital.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Business Committee

12. Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Orders of the Day

Dangerous Dogs Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

6.8 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Following considerable public concern about irresponsible dog ownership and increases in the numbers of reported attacks by dogs, the Government issued a consultation paper in June 1990 on the control of dogs. We proposed a series of measures to bring about the safer control of dogs, and powers to penalise the irresponsible owner. The response to the consultation paper showed an encouraging measure of support for such action.

During the past few weeks, a number of horrific attacks by dogs on adults and young children has led to a clear demand for swift action by the Government to end this menance. The most recent attacks have been of a different degree of seriouness compared with the great majority of dog-biting incidents. The whole country was shocked at the injuries caused to Rucksana Khan by a pit bull terrier last month and the savage attacks by these dogs on other people, including Mr. Frank Tempest.

The public rightly look to the Government for protection against these dogs. The Dangerous Dogs Bill sets out our proposals for giving the public that protection. The aim of the Bill is a simple one—to rid the country of the menace of these fighting dogs. I am glad to say that in all the discussions I had last week with the different dog interests, the groups to which I spoke agreed that these dogs should be removed from our society.

Since I announced on 22 May my intention to introduce this legislation, some have suggested that the Government were over-reacting to the problem, that eliminating the fighting dogs is not the answer and that there is no such thing as a bad dog, only a bad owner. But there is clear evidence that these dogs are a danger and a menace and are a type to be set apart from other dogs. I understand that that view is shared by those on the Opposition Front Bench. That is why we acted to ban the import of these dogs and other fighting dogs last month and that is why we have introduced the Bill as an urgent response to this problem.

As I undertook in my statement, I have had extensive consultations with many of the organisations with an interest in dogs—the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Kennel Club, the Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society and the Canine Defence League—as well as the veterinary organisations, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the British Veterinary Association. All support the aim of this legislation, which clause 1 sets out, of eliminating dogs bred for fighting, such as the pit bull and the tosa, from our society.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Home Secretary mentioned a list of organisations with which he has been in contact, but he did not mention those that I raised with the Leader of the House—the insurance companies. A number of people who own fighting dogs and who have had them muzzled and neutered have made inquiries as to

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

how they can get them insured. Many of them have come up with the answer that it will be extremely difficult to do that. Has the Home Secretary anything to tell us on that? Has he met the insurance companies, and is a list of those willing to insure such dogs available so that the public will know exactly what to do?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman made that point earlier. We have talked to various insurance interests. For example, the chief executive of the Association of British Insurers has commented on that and my officials have met the interests to discuss the possibility of insuring the dogs specifically referred to in clause 1 and for other wider matters.

The Association of Britsh Insurers has no information that policies are being refused. On the contrary, some companies are now coming forward with policies specifically geared to the new legislation.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): If the Secretary of State obtains a list of companies willing to insure such dogs, will he publish it? I have constituents who have had their dogs neutered and muzzled and have inquired about insurance with 12 companies, but insurance has been blatantly and blankly refused.

Mr. Baker: Of course I will do what the hon. Gentleman suggests. Insurance of dogs is a complicated matter. In many cases, the householder who is also a dog owner has the liability resulting from the dog covered by the household insurance policy. Insurance companies are now examining that in the light of the experience with pit bull terriers, but I shall do as the hon. Gentleman has asked.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Home Secretary clarify one point? This is one of those strange parliamentary questions which seeks information.

Does the Bill contain, or will the Home Secretary propose, an order which will require owners of dogs of any category to take out third-party insurance? He told us about that in his statement, but I can find no reference to it in the Bill.

Mr. Baker: I shall deal with that shortly when I consider clause 1. I shall answer the point when I come to it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is it not a fair point that, if an insurance company is not prepared to take the risk of insuring a particular dog, the public should not be subjected to the risks of that dog?

Mr. Baker: I shall discuss that with the insurers and the animal welfare organisations that are considering proposals that might cover particular breeds. As I shall explain in a moment, there is a necessity to insure the dogs referred to in clause 1.

Clause 1 spells out the criminal offence which will apply to these dogs and to any other fighting dogs which I may specify by order. The pit bull is today's problem. It is important that I should have the power to take action against any new fighting breeds which may emerge in the future. Clause 1(c) gives me that power. It also gives me the power, in effect, to refine the definition of any fighting dog, including the pit bull, by order. During the debate on the timetable motion it was said that no one underestimates the difficulties of defining in law what is in fact a cross-breed dog. Many experts in this and other countries are considering the point and perhaps in time a more precise and scientific definition may emerge. In the meantime, the Bill's expression

"any dog of the type known as the pit bull terrier"

is one that is understandable to the lawyer and the layman.

Clause 1 sets out the criminal offences which will apply to these dogs. It covers their breeding; selling or exchanging them; giving them away; advertising them; abandoning them; or letting them stray. I expect these offences to become law as soon as the Bill is enacted. That is why it was necessary to put the Bill on to the statute book so quickly. From that moment, it will also be a criminal offence to have a pit bull terrier or a tosa in public without a muzzle and a lead. This is an important step which will provide protection to the public immediately the Bill becomes law. There are stiff penalties for these offences—a maximum of six months' imprisonment and a maximum fine of £2,000, which will rise to a maximum of £5,000 when the Criminal Justice Bill, which increases fine levels, becomes law.

Clause 1(3) also creates the offence of owning or keeping a prohibited dog. I intend to bring in this offence, after the other criminal offences in the Bill, at the end of November. It means that there will be a period of some three to four months before owning one of these dogs becomes an offence, when the owner can decide to do one of two things.

First, the owner can decide to have his dog put down voluntarily, and the Government will provide an incentive for owners to do so. Clause 1(3) allows me to make by order a scheme to pay owners who want the dogs put down a sum by way of compensation for the dog and to contribute to some of the cost of its being put down. I am consulting the veterinary profession and animal welfare organisations about the precise level of the sum to be paid to each owner. The cost of putting down a dog varies from one part of the country to another. Many claim that pit bulls are valuable dogs. But much of that value is based on their fighting prowess, or, in the grim euphemisms which dog fighters use, their "gameness" or "heroic qualities". It would be quite wrong for the sum which I shall make available to take this sort of factor into account. Dog fighting is an illegal and deplorable act, condemned by all those with a true interest in animals.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will the Secretary of State explain how he intends to prove ownership of a dog?

Mr. Baker: I shall come to that point. I am now dealing specifically with clause 1, which, as I shall explain, deals with how a dog will obtain a certificate of exemption and the owner will be identified. I ask hon. Members to wait and all will be revealed.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Home Secretary tell us when he expects to produce the orders which are specifically referred to in clause 1, and in other clauses too? Are the orders already in draft form, or does the Secretary of State have to finish consultations? When does he expect them to be ready?

Mr. Baker: I expect to publish them shortly. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the point during the debate on the timetable motion. I shall specify what the orders will

contain, and they will be ready for consultation while the Bill is in its passage through the House and before it reaches another place.

Before I answer my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), I shall deal with compensation. The best advice that we have suggests that the intrinsic value of the pit bull terrier is about £25. The sum available to cover compensation and destruction will therefore probably be in the region of £50. It will be payable by the Home Office on production of a certificate from a veterinary surgeon stating that the dog is a pit bull terrier and has been put down. The precise details of the scheme will be set out in an order made under clause 1(3).

I hope that the responsible owners of those fighting dogs will look at the pictures and the descriptions of what they can do, will perhaps think of their own and other people's children as they do so, and will decide that the risk is too great—that these dogs have no place in the family home. If they do that before the end of November, they need have no fear of prosecution. They can claim compensation. They can then seek the advice of a vet, the RSPCA or the Kennel Club about breeds of dog that make safe and friendly family pets, dogs that will not maim and kill.

When I announced to the House on 22 May that I would introduce urgent legislation I said that I would also be considering the possibility of exemptions from the prohibition on ownership of these dogs. The desirability of exemptions was stressed by the animal welfare groups who came to see me. The order-making power in clause 1(5) enables me to set up a scheme for exemptions, about which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked.

The exemption scheme will be tightly drawn and tough. I am discussing the practical details with the police, the veterinary bodies and the animal welfare organisations. Before I make the order under clause 1(5), I shall issue it in draft form for consultation.

Under the scheme, the person who wishes to retain his dog will have to do the following. He will have to obtain a form from the police and provide them with his name and address. He will then have to have his dog, male or female, neutered by a veterinary surgeon. Neutering is of course a means of ensuring that the breed cannot continue. The veterinary surgeon will also mark the dog.

The owner will also have to arrange for the dog to be covered by third-party insurance. He will then have to provide proof of insurance and proof of neutering in order to obtain a certificate of exemption to keep the dog. There will need to be a central index of exempted dogs to which the police or dog wardens will have access to check the details of any dog which they seize or which is the subject of a complaint. We shall be putting the task of running this scheme out to tender very shortly. Whoever is appointed will need to work closely with the police, the Home Office and the other agencies involved.

The owner who wishes to exempt his dog will have to meet the full cost of doing so himself. The cost of neutering by a vet varies according to the sex of the dog. Spaying a bitch can cost in the region of £100.

The cost of insurance is a matter for the owner to work out with his insurance company, but will add to the cost. I accept the point of the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). The operating costs of the scheme, which would include a central index of exempted dogs, will be fully recoverable through the fee to be charged for the certificate of exemption. The fee cannot be fully determined until the final details are settled.

The exemption scheme contains a tough and costly set of requirements for the owner of such dogs to meet. A breach of any of the requirements will mean that the dog is no longer exempted and the owner commits the offence of possession in clause 1(3)—an offence as from 30 November. I must emphasise that, as soon as the Bill is enacted, the owner of the dog must keep it muzzled and on a lead in public.

At the end of November, the offence of possessing, or having custody of a prohibited dog will come into force.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Can my right hon. Friend confirm from his discussions with the Kennel Club—probably the greatest authority on the handling of dogs in the country—that it has approved the exemption scheme? My right hon. Friend will be aware that it is against any form of dog registration, but, in a sense, the exemption scheme calls for a scheme of dog registration. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the club has been consulted on this and is happy with the scheme?

Mr. Baker: I can confirm that the Kennel Club has made it clear in discussions with me that it is against any form of general dog registration. However, it is one of the groups that wants to consider operating the exemption scheme to produce certificates of exemption. I am glad to tell the House that two other organisations concerned with animal welfare also want to operate the scheme. Some companies have also expressed an interest. We shall consider which one to choose when we go out to tender. I confirm exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) has said.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I apologise for missing the beginning of the right hon. Gentleman's speech. He has just said that to have a dog or a bitch neutered or spayed will be a costly procedure. I understand that the issue of compensation was discussed earlier, but I believe that it is unfair that those responsible owners—despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) may think about people who own pit bull terriers, there are some responsible owners—who might be unable to afford the process will be caught by the Bill. Will there be some provision for owners to get money from the Government, even if they do not take compensation? They should have some money from the Government to do what the Government are requiring them to do.

Mr. Baker: Clause 1(3) makes it illegal to own such a dog from 30 November unless certain conditions are fulfilled. When the Government change the law to make illegal what is now legal, it is reasonable to compensate those people who offer to have their dogs put down. We do not believe that it is right to compensate those who wish to keep their dogs and to neuter them. I have been in discussion with various animal welfare lobbies and one in particular has said that it is prepared to give assistance to owners who want their dogs to be neutered. However, I do not believe that it is right in principle for Government money to be used in that way.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Can my right hon. Friend describe any difficulties he anticipates in defining such dogs, particularly where cross-breeding may have taken place?

Mr. Baker: One cannot disguise that that is a problem. When I came to the Home Office I was told that it would be difficult to provide such definitions, but I have studied what other legislatures have done. Holland, for example, is now trying to define such breeds much more precisely. The Dutch Government are taking action similar to that which we are proposing.

I have always recognised that the identification of pit bull terriers might be difficult, particularly because of their possible confusion with the brindle Staffordshire terrier. As a result of consultation with interested parties we are producing guidance for the use of customs, the police and dog wardens. I shall issue that guidance as soon as the Bill has been enacted. We are receiving useful help from the Kennel Club and British Veterinary Association on this matter.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend said that he is making arrangements for those dogs that will be exempted from the ban. Will those arrangements include some vetting of the premises in which those dogs are kept?

Mr. Baker: I shall answer that when I come to clause 3, which bears upon that matter.

At the end of November the offence of possessing or having custody of a prohibited dog will come into force. Those who have not voluntarily had their dogs put down or successfully had them exempted at that stage will face a term of imprisonment of up to six months and a maximum fine of £2,000, which will rise to £5,000 when the Criminal Justice Bill becomes law. The important point about this offence, in common with any of the other clause 1 offences—it also relates to the question behind the intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson)—is that the onus will be on the accused to prove that his dog is not a pit bull terrier.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I wish that my right hon. Friend had shown me how ownership was to be proved. It appears that exemption is a form of negative registration, but what if the man says that he does not own the dog? How does the Secretary of State intend to proceed against him?

Mr. Baker: Identifying and matching an owner to such dogs has never been a problem in the past. Let us say that a complaint is made in January next year about someone keeping a pit bull terrier. That complaint must be investigated either by a dog warden or a member of the police force. Such investigations already take place because the police are frequently called to a house to look at a dog. Someone in that house is either the keeper or the owner of that dog and is responsible for it. From the end of November such possession will be an offence and action will be taken against the owner of that dog as identified in the house at that time.

The conditions of clause 1 mean that the identification of the owner is simple and straightforward. Under clause 1 the owner must go to a police station, register his name and address and get a form. He will then have to send it off and must follow through the various processes that I have outlined.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary is in some difficulty in trying to explain how he will deal with the concept of ownership. He can save himself the trouble, because the Bill refers not to ownership, but to possession. The right hon. Gentleman's lawyers will tell him that those are two very different matters, and possession is well covered by case law. He is defending himself against a false point.

Mr. Baker: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's help, such as it is. I am aware that the Bill covers not only ownership, but the keepers. That is important, because there could be a dispute in a household about whether someone was the owner or the keeper.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): In view of the possibility of such animals being moved, has there been any consultation with the authorities in the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and the Republic of Ireland?

Mr. Baker: I admit that I have not had any consultations with the Isle of Man. Now that the point has been drawn to may attention, I shall consider it. All that I know about the Republic of Ireland is that it has had a dog registration scheme for three or four years, but only about 30 per cent. of dogs are registered. There may be many reasons for that, but I shall not speculate. Following my statement on 22 May, I was informed that many pit bull owners had moved their dogs to the Republic of Ireland, which led that country to introduce an import ban.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Can my right hon. Friend clarify what will be involved in the registration of the names of owners with the police? Is it simply a matter of collecting a form from a police station, or will the police station have to keep a list of owners?

Mr. Baker: It will be both. A form will have to be collected and the police station will have to keep a list of owners and dogs. After that, it will be passed to an agency to deal with the bureaucracy—perhaps an agency that has already been mentioned, or any other that decides to tender.

An essential part of the Bill is the distinction that it draws between dogs bred for fighting, such as the pit bull and the tosa—that comes under clause 1—and other dogs that might be dangerous if not properly controlled. During exchanges following my statement on 22 May, it was claimed that the proposals did not go far enough and that we should ban rottweilers, dobermans and other dogs that have the potential to be dangeous——

Mr. Tony Banks: Corgis.

Mr. Baker: Indeed. I have considered the matter carefully, in consultation with the veterinary bodies, the RSPCA, the Kennel Club and other organisations. I have concluded that there is not a case for a ban on the ownership of types or breeds of dogs, other than those covered by clause 1.

However, there is no doubt that large and powerful dogs frighten members of the public when they encounter them on the streets or in our parks—and some of them can cause serious injuries. There is some evidence that responsible dog lovers recognise that and are moving away from owning certain dangerous breeds. It is significant that

the number of new registrations of rottweilers with the Kennel Club fell by more than two thirds between 1989 and 1990. That is a welcome trend.

It is vital that those who own such types of dogs and others are made more responsible for the way in which they are controlled. The Bill recognises the strength of that point in the criminal offence that it sets out in clause 3(1). That makes it an offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place, together with an aggravated offence—that is, if the dog actually attacks somebody—in cases where injury is caused to a person. "Public place" is defined in clause 8(2), and "dangerously out of control" in clause 8(4). The penalty for the offence is imprisonment for up to six months or a fine of up to £5,000. The penalty for an aggravated offence—a dog that is dangerously out of control that savages or bites somebody—is two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The right hon. Gentleman referred to the definition in clause 8(2). Does it include the public parts of tower blocks and maisonettes, which are not in themselves public places but are shared by the residents?

Mr. Baker: We shall be dealing with amendments that relate to that specific point. The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that the law is complicated on the definition of a public place. I have some sympathy with the spirit of the amendments, as I shall explain later.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): My right hon. Friend knows that I am concerned about the scope of clause 8(4), which states:

"For the purposes of this Act a dog shall be regarded as dangerously out of control on any occasion on which there are grounds for reasonable apprehension that it will cause injury to any person, whether or not it actually does so."

If a pet dog ran into the street and a cyclist swerved, there might be some reasonable apprehension that that cyclist might be injured. I do not believe that it is the intention of the Bill to capture such dogs in its scope. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would review the clause and ensure that it does not do so.

Mr. Baker: There is a difference between a dog that causes injury to a person by its bite and a dog that causes a traffic accident in which someone is injured. Many such dogs are strays. In the first case, there is a link between the owner, who did not exercise control, and the dog that caused the injury. In the second case, it is not the dog that causes the injury, but the driver of a car because of the resulting accident. It is therefore unlikely that the aggravated offence would be applicable. I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about the matter, and I shall write to him to explain it in greater detail.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Can my hon. Friend confirm that there is already a rule—although seldom applied—that requires all dogs, of any type, to bear owner identification? If there is such a rule—I do not believe that it is appreciated outside this House—can my right hon. Friend suggest how it can be tightened? That is crucial to this important clause.

Mr. Baker: There is indeed a requirement in law for dogs to be tagged. I understand that the law came into operation in March this year and that it is the duty of local authorities to enforce it.

The point that I was making about clause 3 is that it is important because it applies to all dogs. It does not deal only with the fighting dogs under clause 1, nor those covered by clause 2. Clause 3 relates to the offence of a dog being dangerously out of control in a public place. That offence, with its tough penalties, will be a powerful means of ensuring that the owners of all dogs, whatever the type, take proper steps to ensure that they are kept properly under control. When my predecessor put that proposal in our consultation paper a year ago, there was a considerable measure of support for it from the various interested groups and from the general public. That is why we have included it in the Bill. The measure will apply to any dog and its owner. I recognise that if, in future, a particular breed of dog is responsible for a number of serious incidents, to the point where it represents a serious danger to the public, the House may call for all dogs of that breed to be subject to special restrictions.

That brings me to clause 2, which provides a reserve power to impose restrictions in those circumstances. It will enable the Home Secretary to apply the Bill's new criminal offences of failing to muzzle and have on a lead, and of abandoning or letting stray, to be applied by order to named types of dog—that is, a complete breed.

Subjecting any of the recognised breeds of dogs to permanent muzzling in public, and making it a specific offence to abandon a dog of such a breed, would be a very serious step. Clause 2 therefore imposes upon the Home Secretary an obligation to consult widely representatives of the veterinary profession, animal welfare organisations and bodies with a special knowledge of dogs before making such an order. Before such an order is implemented, it must be approved by both Houses of Parliament—that is, by the positive procedure. That is an important power to have in reserve if the provisions in the Bill aimed at encouraging responsible ownership and control of dogs prove not to be sufficient. However, I am not convinced that, at present, there is a case for singling out any types of dogs, other than those specified in clause 1, for action that would apply to all dogs of that type.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I understand the Minister's difficulty with the definition of a particular kind of dog, but with regard to the behaviour of the dog and the control that the owner has over it, would a pack of dogs invading somebody's garden and killing his pets be unacceptable behaviour? Would the dog be considered to be out of control and the owner liable under the Bill?

Mr. Baker: May I consider that question and reply to the hon. Gentleman later in the debate? I should have thought that an offence would have been committed.

It is clearly right for members of the public who are fearful for their safety because of the threat presented by a particular dog to be able to do something about it. Clause 3(4) is an important new change and provides them with the means of doing so. It strengthens the power in the Dogs Act 1871 and enables anyone who considers that a dog is dangerous and is not kept under proper control to apply to the court for an order to require its owner to keep it under control.

The Bill makes two important changes to the existing power. First, it enables the court to make an order, whether or not a dog that is thought to be dangerous has caused injury to a person. It is important to appreciate that

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a court order can be made agaainst a dog that has not necessarily been savage or attacked someone. Secondly, it enables the court to specify particular measures by which the dog should be controlled—that answers an earlier question. The measures named in 3(4)(b) are muzzling, keeping on a lead and excluding the dog from specified places. However, the court would have the power to specify other measures if it was thought necessary.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): From what my right hon. Friend says, I understand that he is referring to a magistrates court. If so, is there not a problem, in that that is not a court of record, and what might be specified in one magistrates court would not necessarily be followed in another? Can he at least ask the Lord Chancellor to think about the matter and give guidance to the Magistrates Association?

Mr. Baker: That suggestion makes a good deal of sense. As Home Secretary, I would not be the right person to give guidance on that; it would fall to the Lord Chancellor. I hope that a consistency of practice will develop fairly quickly, but I take my hon. Friend's point.

This is an important new power. It would mean that the person whose next-door neighbour's dog regularly jumps over the fence and creates a danger would be able to seek to have it restrained so that it did not do so. It would also mean that the postman who knew that the dog at, say, No. 53 had a tendency to attack had a means of forcing the owner to stop it attacking him by controlling it.

The refinement and extension of the power in the Dogs Act 1871, as set out in clause 3(4), were warmly welcomed last year when we issued the consultation paper on the control of dogs. I hope that it will be widely used by those whose lives are made a misery by irresponsible owners whose dogs are a danger because they are not properly controlled.

Mr. Marlow: If a postman is walking up the garden path in private premises in somebody's front garden, how can the courts require that person on private premises to stop that dog putting the postman at risk?

If a dog is dangerously out of control in a public place, an offence is committed; if a dog runs in front of a car, is it not dangerously out of control in a public place?

Mr. Baker: On my hon. Friend's first point about the postman, the court would have the power, under clause 3(4), to require that the dog at No. 53 that was the subject of the complaint should not be allowed in the front garden. The court could specify that the dog should be allowed only in the back yard, which had a fence round it. It could specify that degree of detail. That is why I emphasise the importance of this new power.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On the question of dogs not designated under clause 2, will the Secretary of State say how he proposes to exercise continuing scrutiny of some of the dogs mentioned in clause 1 that are cross-bred abroad for importation?

Mr. Baker: The difficulty with defining the pit bull terrier is that it is a cross-breed which has been cross-bred for nearly 150 years, and which has drawn from various strains a degree of viciousness and strength, and a determination to fight and to kill. Other cross-breeds may be bred in the future. That is why the Home Secretary has been given powers under clause 1 to add other known dogs, or to redefine the cross-breeds. Flexibility is required. It is pointless to include all cross-breeds in the Bill, because various animal welfare interests are still unclear about the definitions. They are being clarified all the time; I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point.

Let me turn to the other provisions of the Bill. Clause 4 sets out powers for the courts to put down the dogs of those convicted of criminal offences under the Bill, and to order those convicted to be disqualified from having further custody of a dog. One amendment would extend that from one year to five years. In the case of the aggravated offence under clause 3 and the criminal offences where a fighting dog is involved, the court is required to order that the dog be put down. The clause also enables the owner of the dog, or the person convicted of the criminal offence, to appeal against the destruction of the dog.

Mr. Rathbone: Further to my previous question—it is pertinent to this clause—if the dog is not identified by the tag that is required under the Bill, will the courts have the absolute right, without further question, to have that dog put down?

Mr. Baker: That happens now if the dog is a stray and is not identifiable. The dog is caught and is usually put down, either by a dog warden or by one of the various agencies that deal with such matters. It may be taken to a home whose rules require that a dog is never put down. It will be no different in the future.

Clause 4 gives the court the power to require that the dog is handed over to be put down, and to reclaim the costs of destruction and the costs of detaining the dog from the offender. If those costs are not paid, they can be recovered as a civil debt.

The court has the power to disqualify anyone convicted of any of the offences in the Bill from having custody of a dog for any period that it thinks fit. A person disqualified from having a dog can apply after one year—one amendment relates to that—to have the disqualification lifted. Clause 4(7) sets out the criteria that the court must have in mind in deciding whether to grant or refuse the application. The court may order the applicant to pay all or any part of the costs of the application. Clause 4(8) makes it an offence to have a dog while disqualified from doing so, or to fail to hand a dog over for destruction.

Clause 5 gives a police constable or dog warden the power to seize a fighting dog that has no muzzle or is not being kept on a lead. From the end of July, when the Bill is enacted, that will be an offence. It also gives the power to seize a fighting dog after possession becomes an offence and other dogs covered by other parts of the Bill. Clause 5(2) gives powers to a magistrate, following evidence that an offence under the Bill is being committed, to issue a warrant authorising the police to enter premises, using force if necessary to search them and to seize any dog or other evidence of the offence. Clause 5(4) gives powers for a dog that has been seized to be destroyed when no prosecution is being brought under the Bill, including when the owner of the dog cannot be traced. That is the very point to which my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) referred.

Clause 7 provides for the costs of any compensation scheme and other costs to be defrayed out of money provided by Parliament. Clause 8 sets out various definitions in the Bill and provides for the Bill, when enacted, to be brought into force in stages.

Madam Deputy Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker; I apologise. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be neither neutered nor muzzled. The Bill sets out specific measures to tackle problems posed by fighting and other dangerous dogs. Its main proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation with various representative bodies. They have recognised and supported the need for emergency measures to tackle the dangers posed to the public by fighting dogs.

Some of those organisations and some hon. Members would, I know, like to use the Bill for other purposes related to dogs, their welfare and their ownership. There will be an opportunity to debate dog registration when we discuss the new clause in the name of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) —which, together with another new clause, will be debated later this evening.

The Government's views on dog registration are clear. I do not consider that a full-scale registration system, covering some 7 million dogs, recording the ownership of every chihuahua and poodle in the country, would have made the slightest difference to the spate of attacks by pit bull terriers that we have witnessed recently. The ownership of the pit bull terriers that were responsible for the most recent attacks was quickly established: there was no question who owned them. The cost of a registration scheme would be considerable. The RSPCA envisaged a cost of £20 million for setting up and administering it. The cost of a dog warden service would add a further £22 million, according to costing prepared for the RSPCA by the London School of Economics in 1989.

Others will have the opportunity to present their views during the Bill's passage. I hope, however, that hon. Members will not let any differences of view that may exist about dog registration prevent them from giving wholehearted support to other measures in the Bill.

The provisions contained in this public protection Bill are tough and specific. Their aim is to deal quickly and effectively with a serious danger. I believe that an overwhelming majority of the public want this preventive measure, which is intended to avoid a repetition of the attacks that we have witnessed recently, to pass quickly into law. I urge all hon. Members to support it and to ensure that that happens.

6.50 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Opposition support the Bill; there is no question of our voting against it tonight. We believe that the possession of the listed species—the pit bull terriers and the tosas—should be prohibited, and we shall vote for the Bill not least because such a prohibition appears in it.

We also believe, however, that that objective cannot be achieved overnight. That is why, when the Home Secretary made his statement on 26 May, I spoke of eventual elimination. We consider the method by which the Government propose to proceed towards that end—eventual elimination and eventual prohibition—to be about right. We approve of giving people the chance to have a restricted dog put down with compensation, the possibility of certain limited exceptions, and the elimination or obligatory destruction of any dogs in the restricted categories that do not meet the exemption conditions.

Given that the Home Secretary is apparently no longer listening, I shall be grateful for confirmation from the Minister of State that the British Veterinary Association has agreed to co-operate in the destruction of prohibited species that are not covered by the exemption provision. I understand that when there was talk of wholesale, immediate destruction, the association was reluctant—perhaps, indeed, positively refused—to co-operate. I hope that the Minister will confirm that it is now prepared to do the work that is essential to the Bill's operation.

The Opposition also believe in the need for powers that could be used to protect the public against other dangerous species—and, indeed, could be applied to ensure the proper control of individual dogs that were known to be a threat to public safety. On 22 May, I said that other breeds and species should not be eliminated from the country altogether, but should perhaps be subject to a less drastic form of control. Because less drastic but none the less necessary provisions to that effect now appear in clauses 2 and 3, we have another reason to vote for the Bill—or, at least, to support it, if there is no Division.

The Bill has much more in common with proposals advanced by the Opposition on 22 May than with the prepared statement made at the same time by the Home Secretary. That initial statement said nothing about what I had mentioned on that date—action against some breeds which, although they were occasionally dangerous, it would be wrong to prohibit altogether. Only in a supplementary answer to a question did the Home Secretary contemplate making it a criminal offence to own a dog that became dangerously out of control in public.

It would be churlish for us to vote against a Bill which contains many of the proposals that we have advocated for much longer than the Government have supported them. Virtually all the Bill's proposals could have become law a year ago if the Government had supported the Opposition's amendments to the Environmental Protection Bill. The Bill is, as far as it goes, a move in the right direction, and one what we have long advocated.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I note from the Order Paper that the right hon. Gentleman wishes the rottweiler to be included in the category of fighting dogs. What consultation or discussion has he engaged in? Has he discussed with the veterinary organisations their willingness to deal with that breed, as he is asking the Government about their role in dealing with the breeds mentioned in the Bill?

Mr. Hattersley: It is extremely unlikely—probably impossible—that the Opposition will divide the House on that amendment. It is essentially a probing amendment.

The Home Secretary has told us about his vast and continuing consultations. As far as I can see, the only people whom he has not consulted are the other parties in the House, the only way in which we can engage in something approaching consultation is to table amendments that force him to talk to politicians in the way in which he talks to dog organisations. The rottweiler amendment is intended to obtain his opinion first hand; and, although I do not believe for a minute that we shall

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press it to a Division, I feel that we are entirely entitled to be told what he might have had the courtesy to tell us earlier—why he has come to his conclusions.

As I have said, the Opposition support the Bill—although perhaps not quite so enthusiastically as the Home Secretary, who scaled new heights of self-congratulation in issuing a statement headed:

"Home Secretary Welcomes Dogs Bill".

I know that the Government are riddled with divisions and disagreements, but the idea that a Secretary of State should have to announce that he is in favour of a Bill that carries his name surely takes the need to demonstrate unity to a new extreme.

Although I cannot welcome the Bill with the same glee that the right hon. Gentleman has demonstrated, I nevertheless give it my backing. The Opposition feel, however, that it suffers from a number of damaging omissions. I wish to deal with three of them, and to pursue questions that the Home Secretary has answered only in part and not wholly to my satisfaction.

I want legislation to ensure that dogs—not only the classified species, but those described as "Other, . . . dangerous dogs" and those that may be covered by clause 3—are kept in safe conditions. The Home Secretary has told us that, because of clause 3(4), a judge may insist that a dog be kept on a lead, specify muzzling, or introduce other qualifications. Surely, however, some breeds are so potentially lethal that they should in general be treated like firearms. It is an offence to have a firearm in a public place if it may damage a member of the public, and we still insist that such a firearm is kept where it is not likely to go astray and, in particular, cannot be stolen. Why did the Government not wish to include in the Bill a specific provision for the general safe-keeping of dogs in certain categories?

There seem to be no proposals for obligatory third party insurance of all dogs classified as "Other specially dangerous dogs". I take the Home Secretary's point that, when an exception order is made for the two categories to be destroyed, that order may require the dog's owner to keep it in a safe place, as specified by the Home Secretary or his representative. The Bill, however, concedes the existence of "Other specially dangerous dogs". Surely a condition of their ownership or possession should be the possession of third party insurance, which would in some way compensate other people who will surely be attacked and injured.

Mr. Tony Banks: I agree with my right hon. Friend, but can he not push this a little further? Surely compulsory third party insurance for all breeds is highly desirable by means of a dog registration scheme. It need not be a dangerous dog which runs out into the street and causes an accident, following which no one can obtain any compensation.

Mr. Hattersley: I am certainly in favour of the Home Secretary having the power to insist that some groups of dogs, and perhaps all dogs, should be covered by third party insurance. I agree with my hon. Friend that, when we speak of dogs being out of control in a public place, we are referring not only to those that leap on passers by and savage them. I cite an example given by someone putting the contrary point of view—the dog that runs into the road and under a motor cycle, and is potentially the cause of a fatal accident. In my view, all such risks should be covered by insurance.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is not the Government's proposal like saying to motor car owners that they must have third party insurance if they own an MG, but not if they own a Lada, on the curious assumption that only the MG can be involved in an accident? Is it not the case that most householders effectively have third party insurance in respect of their dogs, as part of their household insurance, and that it is only a case of ensuring that every dog owner has household insurance, or something in its place?

Mr. Hattersley: My understanding, after speaking to insurance companies last week, is that most householders enjoy such coverage but that some do not—and that in many policies the condition is dubious. I believe that that dubiety should be removed, and that such insurance should invariably exist in the case of dog owners.

My hon. Friend's intervention leads me to the Bill's most serious omission—the Home Secretary's failure to introduce a general registration scheme. The introduction of such a scheme is supported by almost all public bodies concerned with dog ownership.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Hattersley: I will first give a list of the people who agree with me. The hon. Gentleman may then like to add his name. I refer to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the League Against Cruel Sports, the British Veterinary Association, the Canine Defence League, the National Farmers Union and the Police Federation.

Mr. Marlow: On 26 October 1983, when the House divided on a proposal to introduce registration, 59 Labour Members voted in favour, but the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), unaccountably, voted against. Why has he changed his mind?

Mr. Hattersley: If I did as the hon. Gentleman claims, I did so in error—by which I mean that it was an error of judgment. The hon. Gentleman ought to rejoice at a sinner come late to repentance. When I say that I voted in error, I do not mean that I went into the wrong Lobby—I mean that I made an error of judgment, a failure much greater than the geograhical mistake of walking in the wrong direction. I see this evening as an opportunity to correct my mistake. I hope that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who may similarly have made mistakes of judgment, will follow my good example. As I said, a sinner come late to repentance is much to be applauded.

A registration scheme is essential in pursuit of the objective that the Home Secretary claims to share—that of encouraging responsible dog ownership. During the right hon. Gentleman's various statements on the control of dangerous dogs, he said time and again that legal action must relate to owners, not to dogs. We can all agree with that, since there has been no prosecution of an animal in Europe since the consistory courts in France in the 16th century. However, statements of the obvious are not an adequate substitute for action.

The overwhelming advantage of registration is that it focuses the minds of dog owners on their responsibilities, and could in specific cases be used to ensure that those obligations are observed. It would certainly help to control dangerous dogs and to eliminate the species that the Home Secretary rightly seeks to proscribe. Despite the right hon. Gentleman's earlier opposition, he has conceded the principle of a register for pit bull terriers and tosas which are, or may be, exempted from clause 1 of the Bill. Clause 5, with all its references to schemes and the payment of charges, manages with some difficulty and ingenuity to avoid the word "register". Nevertheless, a register is there, and a register for those limited categories there will be. The principle having been conceded, the Home Secretary should complete his U-turn by agreeing that registration ought to apply to every type of dog.

Without a register, it may be impossible to make some of the Home Secretary's other proposals work. As well as protecting the general public, a register would provide substantial protection—this is important in creating the right climate of responsible ownership—for the thousands of dogs that are bought each year in this country and then casually discarded after a few weeks of neglect. Registration might not prevent irresponsible people from giving puppies away without considering the quality of the homes to which they go, but it would prevent kennels and pet shops from selling dogs to people without the new owners being reminded of their duties of ownership in being obliged to licence the animal that they have bought.

It is absurd for the Government not to allow a free vote. I repeat the undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) earlier this afternoon—that if the Government will change their mind even at this late stage, we will certainly reciprocate and allow a free vote on this side of the House. A dog registration scheme ought not to be the subject of party controversy. One sign of a Government who have lost their way, their nerve, and their identity, is their readiness to identify as great ideological issues questions that more rational people do not believe have anything to do with party controversy and ideology. The Government simply make themselves look ridiculous by treating the vote on registration as though it were a vote of confidence in the whole Administration.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary shouts, "Rubbish." That enables me to make, with some pleasure, the point that the way in which he has dealt with the whole problem has been nothing short of risible. Day by day, he has not so much vacillated as veered crazily from one extreme to another.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point that dog registration should be the subject of a free vote. The Government have imposed a three-line Whip on my right hon. and hon. Friends. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that Labour Members will have a free vote?

Mr. Hattersley: My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will have a free vote if Conservative Members are allowed a free vote. If the Home Secretary well get up and agree that this is not a matter of party controversy, I will say, "Bravo!" and respond in kind, but the Government cannot operate one rule and expect us to operate another. I repeat my offer: if the Home Secretary will be sensible, we shall gladly respond to his offer. As I see no movement in that direction, the usual—and very often sterile—rules of the House must be applied.

The Home Secretary's record emphasises one of the principle problems with the Bill. It is inadequate because the Home Secretary has sought not to solve a problem but to deal with newspaper headlines over a very limited period. On Sunday, 19 May, when the right hon. Gentleman appeared with David Frost on "Frost on Sunday", he dismissed out of hand the idea of banning dangerous breeds. He said that New York had tried:

> "They brought in a law to ban certain breeds, and they had to repeal it because it was unenforceable . . . as I say, New York tried and had to stop."

He went on to start to say something more constructive:

> "The sort of things that we are looking at . . ."—

unfortunately, he did not finish the sentence, so viewers were never told the sort of things the Government were looking at, although they were promised that, whatever they were, there would be considerable consultation about them.

The result was a barrage of press criticism the next day, culminating in the sort of headlines that we all deplore, such as that in the *Daily Star*, "You Wet Windbag". I have no doubt that that barrage of criticism prompted the Home Secretary to start taking what he presumably regarded as decisive action. On all the evidence, the right hon. Gentleman was still making policy from day to day. In the *Sunday Times* on 26 May, the Home Secretary reiterated his commitment to what he described as the destruction of dangerous dogs. However, he dismissed muzzling with the words,

> "You can't muzzle a dog all the time."

Muzzling now appears in clause 2. The right hon. Gentleman gave equally short shrift to the idea of making it an offence to allow a dog to be out of control in a public place. I quote him exactly:

> "As for control in public places what happened in Lincolnshire was in a private place".

The right hon. Gentleman said that one little girl was with her grandparents when the accident occurred. Now clause 3 makes it an offence for a dog to be out of control in a public place.

The Home Secretary's whole approach is superficial and in some ways trivial. The problem was highlighted in the opening paragraph of *The Sunday Times* report, which said that the right hon. Gentleman was a cat lover—Cheshire cats, we must assume, with a smile and not much else. Throughout the exercise he has worried not about the problem but about the headlines. His own party has criticised him for that, but I regard the criticism that appeared in the papers today from some of his hon. Friends as less than just, for in looking at headlines rather than problems he has done no more than behave in a way now endemic to the Government as a whole.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer gave us another example of such behaviour last week, by responding not to the banks' imposition of exorbitant interest rates, but to the newspaper outcry about exorbitant interest rates. In both cases the problem was caused by Government inaction and failure to take the necessary steps. In each case, the Government responded with a policy designed to influence leader writers rather than to provide a complete remedy.

Headline chasing is another feature of Governments in terminal decline.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The right hon. Gentleman was chiding me, accusing Ministers of having spent the past 12 years not listening. When we do listen he accuses us of listening too much. In 1977 the right hon. Gentleman was a member of the Cabinet when the British Veterinary Association advised against allowing pit bull terriers to be imported. If the Cabinet of which he was a member had taken that advice, all those savagings would not have taken place in the past few years. Why did the right hon. Gentleman ignore that advice when he was a Cabinet Minister?

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary will be astonished to learn that I accept his criticism. We should have acted then. We all should have grown out of the habit of pretending that whatever was done by Administrations of which we were members was perfect. A mistake was made, but the real issue is whether the real problem is going to be faced now. By dealing with the problem in a superficial way, the Home Secretary fails to face the real issue—which, I repeat, and shall go on to explain, is the question of a dog registration scheme.

I have no objection to the Home Secretary's consulting interested parties, but I find it strange that he makes an ex cathedra statement every day about what he intends to do—and the statements change from one 24 hours to the next. I admire him for the fact that every time he changes his mind he announces his new intentions with the absolute certainty with which I remember him saying, almost a year ago, that there was no question but that the Conservative party would win the Mid-Staffordshire by-election. However, this is a more serious matter, with more serious consequences for the general public.

We need a comprehensive scheme, which must include a general register. When, on 22 May, I pressed the Home Secretary on the subject of a national registration scheme, he gave his objections to such a scheme purely in terms of the terrible case of Rucksana Khan—the awful injuries that the child had endured and which had dominated the headlines that week. Today he talks about a register being inappropriate for poodles and chihuahuas, whereas on 22 May he was saying that a register would be inappropriate for tosas and pit bull terriers. He ought to understand that a register is necessary for those prohibited groups, and now he has conceded the point, but a register is also necessary in the drive to reduce the number of other attacks by other dangerous dogs.

I understand that for the past two years an average of 10 dog attacks per month have required the victims to spend a period in hospital. During 1990, in the metropolitan area alone, there were 468 serious attacks, less than a quarter of which were by pit bull terriers. We need measures that will encourage responsible dog ownership in general, and a register is essential to that process.

The National Farmers Union believes that a register would reduce the number of attacks on sheep by stray dogs. The Automobile Association believes that a register would reduce the number of dogs likely to cause damage by running on to roads.

There is another point about responsible dog ownership that the Government need to consider. The creation of the right climate for responsible dog ownership requires the strongest possible action to be taken against those who breed dogs to fight, organise dog fights or attend them—whatever type of dog is involved. I have no doubt that the Home Secretary shares that view and will encourage the courts and others to take the strongest action against such people.

Mr. Baker: Dog fighting is illegal, and registration would not bear on the problem to any significant extent. The right hon. Gentleman is still arguing for a general dog registration scheme. As I shall argue later on the amendments, that would not deal with the problem of dangerous and vicious dogs. The right hon. Gentleman has to justify an elaborate scheme covering all dogs. I warn him that if he thinks that he is on to a winner with the registration scheme, he is not—for Peter Mandelson, who calls the shots on Labour policy, is against a registration scheme. He said so in his column in *The Sunday People*, which is prescribed reading for junior Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. If Mr. Mandelson can engineer the downfall of the Labour party's director of publicity, toppling the shadow Home Secretary should not prove too difficult for him.

Mr. Hattersley: The House may remember that I suggested timidly that the Home Secretary was treating the subject of the debate as trival. If anyone doubted that, the right hon. Gentleman's intervention will have confirmed that it is true.

Apparently the right hon. Gentleman and I are unanimous on taking the strongest possible action against those involved in any way in dog fighting. I cannot see how a man or woman can claim to take a responsible view of dog ownership if the dogs that they own are bred, kept and used for killing live hares, foxes or any other living animal.

The clear problem with the Bill is that when the Home Secretary first considered it he has nothing in his mind except one terrible incident involving one breed. In the House he kept talking about breeds intended for fighting, as if the intention of the dog was somehow important. In fact, as anyone who has been bitten by a dog will agree, the victim is wholly unconcerned with the dog's motives. Nobody cares what is going on in the dog's mind. The problem is what is in the dog's teeth.

All authorities on the subject tell us that almost every dog has the potential to attack, no matter how small or apparently timid it may be. We ought to encourage all dog owners to keep and treat their dogs in a way that minimises the risk. Everyone who thinks about such matters believes that a register would help.

The question of registration is crucial to our reservations about the Bill. When, on 22 May, the Home Secretary dismissed the idea of registration he was even wrong about the way in which a register would have applied to and might have helped in the tragedy of Rucksana Khan. He said:

> "I do not believe that a general registration scheme would have had any effect on the dreadful incident last weekend. If that dog had been registered for £5 and had a computer number on its collar it would not have been prevented from attacking that little girl."

I understand that the right hon. Gentleman has now changed his mind. He believes that if pit bull terriers are to be allowed to remain in society they must have their names on what amounts to a register.

Even before that, the Home Secretary's analysis of the Rucksana Khan case was clearly wrong. I understand that the dog was bought by a young man from a dealer. Under a registration scheme, he would clearly have been required

to register it at the point of purchase. The young man then left the young lady with whom he was living, abandoning the dog in her care.

There is every reason to believe that the young lady would have respected the law, and was greatly concerned at what the dog did while in her custody. Under a registration scheme, she would have been warned of the dangers that the ownership of the dog involved. She would have known—as she would have known in the case of a motor car that had been left in her care—that there was a necessity to licence the animal if it remained in her possession. Knowing of the necessity to licence it, she would have renewed the licence or transferred her name to it. She would then at least have been told of the dangers of keeping the dog and might well have been persuaded to have it put down.

I repeat that, despite his dismissal of the registration scheme, with explicit reference—*[Interruption.]* I think that the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary wishes to say something——

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): No, no.

Mr. Hattersley *rose—*

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Why is it necessary to register the non-violent dogs? That is totally contrary to the point that the right hon. Gentleman is making—he is standing the argument on its head.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. and learned Gentleman is denying all the evidence of the British Veterinary Association and all the animal organisations—all the organisations concerned with dogs, dog welfare and the keeping of dogs—by suggesting that there are some dogs of which he can say, "This one will never attack or do damage." He is also denying all the evidence offered by his hon. Friends that dogs of all breeds may run into the road and cause a lethal accident, and potentially dogs of all breeds will pursue sheep. Opposition Members merely ask for the creation of a climate of responsible ownership.

I repeat that, although the Home Secretary has been converted to the need for the registration of pit bull terriers, which was not his position on 22 May, regrettably he has not been converted to the need for registration in general. He ought to have the grace and sense to accept the need for a general registration scheme because until he does that the Bill will remain inadequate.

I have no hesitation, however, in describing the Bill as a step in the right direction. As the night proceeds, we shall attempt to improve it, but we shall not vote against it because, like the Home Secretary, we wish it to be passed into law at the earliest opportunity.

7.22 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown) I immediately declare my interest. I am the owner of three west highland terriers and a member of the national advisory panel of Pro-Dog.

Unfortunately, both inside and outside the House there is a group of people who loathe dogs. Many of them would like to see every dog in the land put into an incinerator. They would use any weapon that was put in their hands. Some of those people regard the Bill as a measure which, if exploited in a particular way, might provide the necessary weapon.

We talk of dangerous dogs and cite specific breeds, but it is totally wrong to claim that all dogs of a particular breed are dangerous, or even potentially dangerous. We must ask ourselves how it is that dangerous dogs appear on our streets. Until comparatively recently, all of us in Britain were prepared to accept that, on certain occasions, a dog will bite a person. In the past, we have been prepared to live with that.

In recent years, however, a certain culture has emerged, and people now keep particular types of dog for particular purposes. For example, someone may keep a dog with the intention of training it for dog fighting. No one is more filthy and despicable than the scum who get hold of dogs of whatever breed and train them in the most foul and abominable ways in which to kill each other. There are also people who think that it is clever and macho to have a large dog at their heel. They think that it enhances their image and makes them appear great men—powerful and intimidating.

We must ask ourselves what happens and how those dogs are treated. Any dog can become dangerous if it is not properly fed, exercised and trained—and there are far too many dogs in Britain that are not properly fed, exercised and trained. Let us consider each aspect in turn.

I suspect that many dogs are not properly fed. They may be given food produced by so-called pet food companies, but I sometimes ask myself what is in that food. We know of the various forms of factory farming. We know that food is mass produced. In the past—perhaps more than today—animals in factory farms have been fed on the most disgusting products. All sorts of very unpleasant offal, and other spare materials for which there is no other market, have been recycled. What effect has that had on human beings? Many believe that it has had a serious effect. There are controls on food for human consumption, whereas there are no controls on what is put into dog food. If a dog is not properly fed and does not have a balanced diet, it will inevitably have problems in later life.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Let me defend the reputation of the excellent pet food manufacturers in my constituency, who offer a first-class product. May I also, quite properly, defend the renderers' profession, which provides society with a first-class and unique recycling mechanism in respect of unspeakable objects which would otherwise have to be buried. For once, my hon. Friend does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. Bowden: My hon. Friend has a reputation for defending what she regards as her constituency interests—on occasion, without looking beyond them. That can be a somewhat narrow view. Sometimes, we have to consider the national interest rather than just a constituency interest.

What about exercising dogs? Far too many dogs in Britain are imprisoned in small quarters for much of the day. People who own dogs and leave them tied up in the yard or confined to a small room for 10 or 12 hours or more a day are in the process of creating dangerous dogs. Dogs can become frustrated and angry if they are not getting enough exercise or enjoying proper freedom. Similarly, too many people make no effort whatever to train their dogs. All those elements combined lead to the existence of far too many potentially dangerous dogs.

[Mr. Bowden]

That is one side of the picture. We must remember the other side. Many people in this country regard their dogs as full and complete members of their family and treat them accordingly. They feed them properly and make sacrifices to bring them up and to ensure that they enjoy a full life. How different those people are from those who use the dog as a macho symbol or refuse to give it the care and attention that it should have—not just at Christmas or for a few months, but throughout its life.

The breeds that the House is discussing and which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has mentioned—the dogs referred to as "dangerous"—are those most likely to be used for dog fighting. Many of those dogs are taken away from their mothers when they are young puppies —in some cases only a few weeks old. They are then trained for fighting by a method which can only be described as torture to create viciousness. They are fed various products. Often they are given drugs, to which they become addicted. When the drugs are removed or the dose is significantly reduced, the dogs become extremely fierce and dangerous. In some cases, it is not in the nature of the creature to be like that at all.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my hon. Friend going to tackle the problem of dogs which are deliberately cross-bred to enhance the negative qualities that he is talking about?

Mr. Bowden: The two things are linked. Clearly, people who cross-breed dogs because they think that it will make them easier to train for fighting and will make them more vicious or nasty are another example of the despicable business that sadly goes on in our own country and in many other parts of the world.

However, what concerns me about those dogs as a group is that I suspect that every hon. Members knows of a case in his constituency—I certainly know of a number in mine—of pit bull terriers and Staffordshire bull terriers which are totally safe and happy family pets. Some have been described to me as being among the soppiest dogs. The way that such dogs have been brought up, trained and looked after means that they are as safe as any other breed, including my own, the West Highland terrier, which can show considerable signs of fierceness on occasion, especially if they believe that they are protecting their owners.

Mr. Cryer: Following the attack on Rucksana Khan, several observers said that the American pit bull terrier in question was apparently completely playful and had been in and out of nearby flats and played with children. All those witnesses were staggered that the dog had turned out to be so vicious. Therefore, one cannot with any certainty make assumptions about the behaviour of dogs.

Mr. Bowden: One cannot with certainty make assumptions about the behaviour of any animal on this planet—be it human or dog, or any other form of animal. There will be times when any animal, under certain circumstances or for no explicable reason, will behave terribly. The hon. Gentleman is making out a case for the extermination of dogs and that is what worries me about some hon. Members. That is the implication of what he said. Because there have been a tiny number of terrible cases—the number has increased alarmingly in recent years—the next step is to say that one cannot risk one single case, as there might be a terrible incident, and therefore we must go the whole hog and take the appropriate action.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I wonder whether my hon. Friend will support clause 1, which states that the Home Secretary can designate any breed of dog as dangerous, even if it is a chihuahua which happens to catch his ankle. On the following weekend, under clause 1(3), he can

"appoint for the purposes of this subsection"

that no one may own such a dog after that day.

Effectively, that is the elimination of dogs. Under this Bill, any dog can be destroyed on any date that the Home Secretary decides. Is that not too wide a power to take?

Mr. Bowden: That is a rather extreme interpretation of clause 1.

Mr. Devlin: It is in the Bill.

Mr. Bowden: It is still an extreme interpretation. I do not envisage my right hon. Friend, or any future Home Secretary, going down that path to that degree. I would prefer to rely upon the sensible application of clause 3, which is a crucial part of the Bill and which, if it is operated effectively and sensibly by the courts, will have a major part to play in helping to control the problem of dogs, which is without doubt a problem in certain areas.

I must not take up the time of the House, as I know that many hon. Members wish to speak and we are on a timetable. We must never forget that dogs provide friendship, companionship and protection to many people. I have some worries about protection. I hope that, when my right hon. Friend the Minister of State winds up, she will be able to comment on that. It worries me, because many people feel that they need dogs in their homes and gardens to protect them. If the dogs are confined within that private area on private property, it would be quite wrong for such a dog to be liable to be destroyed if it were to bite or attack someone while protecting its owners and their property.

There is also the question of dogs in the street. I shall again quote a personal example. On one occasion, my wife was in the street with one of our west highland terriers when she was accosted by a somewhat aggressive person who placed his fist right under her nose. The west highland terrier at my wife's foot growled, made some fierce noises and showed its teeth. I have no doubt that, if that man had struck my wife, the dog would have had its teeth into his ankle immediately. Is anyone suggesting that under those circumstances, when a dog was protecting its owner, the dog should be liable to be killed? It would be terrible and disgraceful if that were the case.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bowden: I prefer not to. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman but I have given way several times and I do not think that it is fair to the House, so I must continue.

I am committed to dogs, as indeed is the Pro-Dog organisation of which I am a member, and we do not believe that dog registration will work. We know that nearly 70 per cent. of owners have not registered in Northern Ireland. Responsible owners would register, but irresponsible owners would not. What would happen

when it came to deciding about exemptions? If we had a dog registration scheme for all 7 million dogs, there would have to be some exemptions—for example, people on income support and many on pensions. There would be whole groups of exemptions; one would need a "Swansea for dogs", which would cost millions of pounds a year to operate.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Bowden: I would love to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I did not give way to his hon. Friend, and I must continue as quickly as possible.

I was disappointed in the answer of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) when I asked him about a free vote on dog registration. Whatever the Government's reason for their decision, surely the Opposition should have allowed their members a free vote. I know that there are a considerable number of Opposition Members who do not support dog registration —I can see one on the Benches now and he is a man of great integrity. It is wrong that a three-line Whip should have been imposed by anyone, most of all by the Opposition, on an issue of this sort.

I would like firmer control of breeders to result from this Bill. They are the root of many of the problems. I would also like it to result in the elimination of puppy farms, the closing and elimination of pet shops and the selling of pets in supermarkets, and higher fines for irresponsible owners. Collars and discs are now required by law and I want significant fines for those who have failed to obey that law and for people who let their dogs run loose or foul the pavements—significant fines of not £5 or £10 but £50 or £100. If we were to follow those lines, we would go some way to deal with the dog problem that exists.

Society needs dogs. No law should be passed that will allow dogs to be penalised by dog haters and those blinded by prejudice.

7.38 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): My mind goes back to the early days of my political career, when I was a junior urban district councillor. After about five days in office, I attended a public meeting of irate pensioners who were complaining about dog dirt on their open-plan gardens. One of the spokespeople said, "We want signs on the grass saying that dogs cannot defecate here." Being a clever and bright young thing, I said, "That is all very well, but dogs cannot read." I was immediately set upon by 35 pensioners and given the going over of my life. I have not had such a comprehensive going over since. Going through the door, a wise old councillor tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You might remember now, Terry boy, that dog dirt is a potent political issue."

I am reminded of that by the activities of the Lord President and the Home Secretary on this issue, which I accept are far more serious. Their minds are conditioned by the political consequences of not doing something. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who rightly drew attention to the political gymnastics of the Home Secretary over that terrible weekend when Rucksana Khan was savaged by a pit bull terrier.

Only a few days before that young child was savaged, I tabled an early-day motion outrageously suggesting that 10,000 pit bull terriers should be culled. I intended to raise the temperature of the debate in order to get something going. I was the most surprised person in the world when I heard the Home Secretary on the programme to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook referred saying, "We cannot do anything," yet on Monday agreeing with my outrageous idea of putting down 10,000 dogs.

The Lord President made the position worse, because he spoke of speedy solutions. I do not mind speedy solutions, and I shall support the Bill tonight, but it does not go far enough, and I hope to contribute in more detail in Committee. Speed is relevant to the issue. The House should not forget that, more than two years ago, a young girl in Scotland, Kelly Lynch, died. No hon. Member has mentioned that that 11 or 12-year-old girl was savaged to death by two dogs. They were not pit bull terriers but rottweilers. If that did not concentrate the minds of the Home Secretary's predecessor, certainly of the Cabinet and of other hon. Members, something should have. I regret that the Rucksana Khan case led to the introduction of the Bill, but why the blazes were we not in this position two years ago, when a young child lost her life?

That sets the scene for the debate, which is being held because of the impending general election and not because of the major issue of dog control. If the Government wanted seriously to tackle the dog problem, they would start with a dog registration scheme and all that goes with it. It is not just registering dogs and spending £20 million setting up the scheme. However, it must be remembered that the Cabinet have thrown £15 billion at registering people. They have not solved that problem, and, for political reasons, many billions more will be thrown at it. We cannot accept that as a political excuse.

I am sympathetic to some of the issues that have been mentioned, such as muzzling, keeping dogs on leads and exclusion zones, but each has its own problems. Has any hon. Member tried to muzzle an adult dog that has been brought up not to be muzzled? There will be a few neurotic adult dogs going round with muzzles on for the first time in their lives.

Mr. Morley: There will be a few fingers missing, too.

Mr. Lewis: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall not muzzle any pit bull terriers.

I accept that dogs should be on leads in public places, but in the area that I represent, there are limited areas where dogs can be exercised securely. Pit bull terriers, rottweilers and alsatians must be exercised: the bigger the dog, the more exercise it needs. It is all very well if someone has a huge garden, a paddock or a private place to exercise such dogs, but someone who must exercise his dog in public places can experience severe difficulty. Keeping such a dog on a lead can be crueller than putting it down.

Other problems must be debated and resolved. We cannot throw a Bill on the Floor of the House, guillotine it and say, "That will solve the problem", because it will not.

I regret that the provisions of clause 3 do not extend directly to private property. The courts are not the answer, because they are clogged up with poll tax defaulters and associated problems. A postman or woman has a one in four chance of being mauled by anything from a chihuahua to a pit bull terrier.

Mr. Cryer: Or a canvasser.

Mr. Lewis: The same applies to a canvasser, indeed. Last year, 7,000 postmen and women were bit by dogs.

I support the Bill, I hope to be able to make a constructive speech in the Committee stage and I regret that there is no dog registration scheme, but I believe that a dog's breakfast will be created if we do not address the other issues that I have mentioned.

I should rather call the dog registration scheme a comprehensive dogs Act. The hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) mentioned the problem of puppy farming. In pub car parks in north Wales on a Sunday morning, one can see dealers from Manchester picking up five-week-old puppies that should not be taken from bitches at that age and taking them back to Manchester to be sold for £150 or £200.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does my hon. Friend recall that some of those puppy farmers set themselves up in business in response to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food seeking to divert farmers from agriculture production? The same policy is pursued in the EC, which is seeking to subsidise greyhound breeding in member states.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. Friend makes the point well. I believe that he has raised the matter in the House at least once.

We can no longer tolerate almost neurotic dogs being sold in pet shops and so-called pet supermarkets like those in the Manchester area. Control of that must be part of a comprehensive dogs Act. We all know what is going on and we know who the perpetrators are, but RSPCA inspectors have no jurisdiction in puppy farms. Those farms might have two or three brood bitches—birth machines that are used time and again to produce pups.

The Kennel blub has been prayed in aid several times in the debate, but it is as culpable as anybody for that puppy farming. One can go to those disreputable dealers—most of them are disreputable—and be given a piece of paper guaranteeing that a dog is of a certain pedigree.

Mr. Hardy: I am not a member of the Kennel Club, and have not been for quite some time, but the club has been seeking ways of discouraging that practice without being in breach of its own regulations, which it must observe. The Home Secretary will be aware that the responsibility lies with the Home Office. One of my hon. Friends is eager to bring in a Bill on the subject. It could have been presented to the House a long time ago, and I am sure that it would have met with widespread approval. It is time that the Home Office facilitated the passage of such a measure.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. Friend would have more chance of convincing me if the Kennel Club took a more robust approach and a less defensive stance on most dog issues.

I shall reiterate the point that has recurred throughout my speech: responsible dog ownership. The registration scheme would promote responsible dog ownership. I should declare my own interest: I have always had fox terriers. Why fox terriers? My ancient old dog died a year ago, but I am still a responsible dog owner. That seems contradictory, but I am responsible because I know that, with my life style—five days in London and two days back home in my constituency—I cannot find or afford the time to deal responsibly with a new puppy. One needs three or four hours a day to train a puppy to be a responsible adult dog, and because I cannot do that, I shall wait until I retire from this place before I own another dog.

7.51 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I was interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), who drew on his experience as a dog owner and in local government to give some interesting highlights of dog ownership and dog control.

As the House knows, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales, and I declare that interest. Although, like many hon. Members, I regret the need for its introduction, I support the Bill because I believe that the time has come to take action to prevent the continuation of attacks on the public, families and police by ferocious and dangerous dogs, particularly pit bull terriers and other breeds of fighting dogs, including new breeds. I assure my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that the Police Federation wholeheartedly supports his prompt action in introducing the Bill today.

Owners of pit bull terriers in my constituency who have made representations to me understand the need for the Bill, particularly as it does not single out pit bull terriers, but applies to other types of fighting dogs such as the Japanese tosa.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify what he said about the attitude of the Police Federation because I have seen a press release in the name of Mr. Barrie Clarke, the federation's press and public relations officer, which gives a different impression? It says:

"I think the Home Secretary has been badly advised by officials of the home office"

on his proposals to deal with dangerous dogs. The press release complains of a lack of consultation.

Mr. Shersby: There is no conflict between what I am saying and the press release to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Last week the federation was critical of proposals which, it believed, would involve the police in administering the scheme. That was because they already have a great deal to do in preventing crime and did not wish to shoulder the responsibility for the scheme's management. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it perfectly clear today that it is not to be the responsibility of the police, whose sole responsibility will be to issue the forms and register the names of people who apply for them, so that problem has been overcome. There is no doubt that the Bill has the wholehearted support of the Police Federation.

There is quite a lot of anecdotal evidence about attacks on individuals, in addition to information supplied by hon. Members about serious attacks that have resulted in injury or death. Those incidents have been in our minds in recent weeks, but there have been many other attacks in recent months which have gone unreported, but which emphasise the urgent need for action.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I sound like a policeman on duty for a minute or so, but I should like to put a few facts to illustrate my argument. Between November 1989 and May 1990 the Metropolitan police carried out a survey of dangerous dog incidents. I think that that survey is probably the only one available that gives an accurate picture. It showed that there were 237 incidents involving ferocious dogs in the Metropolitan police district during that time, of which no fewer than 95

were carried out by pit bull terriers. Some 50 of them were carried out by German shepherd dogs, 14 by dobermans and the rest by a variety of other breeds. Those are interesting figures because they give the House a clear idea of the proportion of attacks carried out by pit bulls and German shepherd dogs—other breeds came pretty far down the list.

Many of those attacks—but by no means all—were carried out by abandoned dogs, which form a large part of the problem. On 17 January 1990 at Croydon lane, Banstead, an abandoned American pit bull terrier attacked passers-by, probably after it had had a fight. In Lordship lane SE22, an American pit bull terrier was tied and abandoned in an alley way. On 7 May in Old road, Crayford, a pit bull was thrown from a passing car. It was scarred, the police assumed that it had been fighting and it was put down. In November 1989, at Gresley close N15, a Staffordshire bull terrier made an unprovoked attack on two children in its owner's family. A number of attacks have taken place on children in the family of the owner of the animal involved.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): It has been said that some dogs are good family pets. Having spoken to the police, does the hon. Member agree that there is evidence of people breeding aggressive dogs with aggressive bitches to produce even more aggressive offspring?

Mr. Shersby: There is evidence of that, and it is reflected in the number of attacks on the family or close relatives of the owner of the animal involved.

In November, there was an attack at Walton Green, New Addington, when an American pit bull terrier attacked children aged seven and 11 in the street causing puncture wounds to their elbows, chin and cheeks. In another attack at Walsham road SE14, an American pit bull entered a school and attacked a child. It was a completely unprovoked attack and the child and school staff had no way of knowing that the animal would enter the school.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Should we not put the subject in perspective? Although I do not wish to support pit bull terriers—the numbers of attacks frightening—there are an estimated 7·5 million dogs in this country. In comparison to the total number of dogs, the number of attacks seems small.

Mr. Shersby: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, but I must remind him that it is clear from the Metropolitan police survey, which looked at 237 incidents during six months in London, that 95 incidents concerned pit bull terriers. That is a substantial proportion. I will give my hon. Friend another example. In Kennington park, a large group of youths with 10 American pit bull terriers threatened the police. It was thought that the youths may have been preparing the animals for a dog fight. At Horton road, Yiewsley, in my constituency, in April last year, an unsupervised pit bull terrier attacked two goats in a compound, resulting in the death of both goats. That is the nature of the problem with which the Bill is intended to deal.

There is no doubt that the pit bull terrier is one of the most prominent animals in causing death and destruction to human beings and to other animals.

Mr. Devlin: The Metropolitan police figures for 1990 show that of the 468 incidents of attacks on humans, 111 were carried out, as my hon. Friend said, by pit bull terriers. However, 86 were carried out by alsatians. According to the definition in clause 1, it is unlikely to be argued that alsatians are fighting dogs or dogs bred for the purpose of fighting. Unless my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary takes a wide interpretation of clause 1, such attacks will continue unabated by the Bill.

Mr. Shersby: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is listening carefully.

I made the point that 50 attacks during the six months concerned were carried out by German shepherd dogs, which are regarded as being the same as the alsatian breed. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that he would have powers under the Bill to extend the provision. If, on the basis of evidence available to him and to his colleagues in the Home Office, he comes to the conclusion that the German shepherd breed constitutes a danger as it does in certain circumstances, he will no doubt use the powers conferred on him by the Bill to deal with that problem.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): During my lifetime, I have been bitten eight times by dogs. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] I will tell the House exactly where I was bitten. I was bitten on the wrist by a cairn terrier when I offered a sandwich to its mate. That happened at Mackie's Hole in Angus. I was next bitten in Gifford by a collie. I was next bitten by an alsatian when canvassing in Liberton. I was next bitten by an alsatian when canvassing in central Edinburgh. I was next bitten by an alsatian when canvassing in Perthshire. I was next bitten by a scottie when canvassing in Perthshire. I do not think that dogs are all that good about not biting—certainly not biting me.

Mr. Shersby: I am tempted to say that my hon. and learned Friend has made a biting contribution to the debate, but perhaps that is unwise.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made what I and the police thought was a good speech to the police conference in Bournemouth. I and the police officers there listened to that speech with care and attention. I can tell my right hon. Friend that there was a great sense of relief that he was prepared to tackle the problem and that his action has the support of the Opposition. My role in advising the police is a cross-party one and I am delighted that the Opposition have taken a helpful attitude in supporting the Bill tonight.

I was told by a number of officers from various parts of the country at the police conference about the increasing use of pit bull terriers by drug dealers. They use them literally as an offensive weapon to prevent the police from entering premises in which it is believed that drugs are being kept. I was also told that in the United States, that aspect of the problem has become so serious that the police break down the door with a sledgehammer and then shoot the animal concerned without question before searching the premises of the suspected drug dealer.

I am not sure that I command the agreement of the House in saying that we do not wish such a situation to develop here. The police oppose the carrying of firearms and they do not wish to use them in such a situation. However, we must support the police by dealing with the problem and ensuring that drug dealers and others who

[Mr. Shersby]

use ferocious dogs as an offensive weapon can no longer do so. I welcome, therefore, the compulsory muzzling or leashing of pit bull terriers as soon as the Bill becomes law.

I also strongly support the prohibition on possession of a pit bull terrier unless it has satisfied the tough requirements proposed in my right hon. Friend's exemption scheme, which requires certification, confirming neutering and physical marking. The police are glad to know that responsibility for certification will not impose further burdens on their time, which is already under considerable strain. I am glad to know that the tasks will be put out to tender. I regard that as typical of my right hon. Friend's willingness to listen. He has been criticised by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) for making changes since the scheme was announced only a couple of weeks or so ago, but he has listened not only to hon. Members, but to the police, and he deserves all credit for so doing.

The Bill provides for the control of dogs on a public place. Although the police strongly support the Bill, they are still concerned that clause 3 refers only to a dog being dangerously out of control in a public place, which is defined as being

"any street, road or place (whether or not enclosed) to which the public have or are permitted to have access whether for payment or otherwise."

In the Home Office consultation paper to which the Police Federation responded, it was envisaged that powers might be available to the police in any place other than a public place to enable them to control or destroy dogs that were dangerously out of control.

Such a provision would have enabled a police officer to enter premises, as the police often do, with or without a warrant, to deal with domestic disputes and to be able to deal with a dangerous dog. I want my right hon. Friend to consider the following scenario. A police officer is called to go to a home to deal with a domestic dispute. That happens every day. That constable may face a ferocious dog. How is he to deal with a ferocious animal being set on him? Under the Bill, it will not be possible for the provision to apply because the police officer is in a private, not a public place. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister for State, when he replies to the debate, will tell the House about the Home Office's thinking on that point.

If such a scenario occurs, the police can, if support is available, try with the assistance of a dog handler or a veterinarian to tranquilise the dog. The destruction of the dog on private premises would always be a last resort. However, why is there no provision in the Bill to deal with the problem that a constable may face? Let us consider a constable who could be of any age from 18 to retirement age, and who faces a ferocious animal. That is a difficult task.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider that problem further, because the police are concerned about it and the problem has clearly not yet been resolved. I assume that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has decided as a matter of policy that an offence should occur only in a public place. However, I have been told that it could be argued that an owner or a person in charge of a dog may not allow a dog to leave the home and therefore enter a public place. That person may then be able to plead a defence if the dog escapes without the owner's intervention.

The same question could arise in relation to clause 1(2)(e), where there is no definition of "stray". When my right hon. Friend the Minister of State replies to the debate, perhaps he can tell me whether "stray" is defined in some ancient statute about dogs. I should be interested in such a definition.

Clause 1(3) relates to the destruction scheme. Who will administer that scheme? Why does there appear to be an apparent contradiction in clause 4(4)(b), which states that the offender may be ordered by the court

"to pay such sum as the court may determine to be the reasonable expenses of destroying the dog and of keeping it pending its destruction",

and clause 4(5), which states:

"Any sum . . . shall be recoverable . . . as a civil debt"—

a point that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made earlier? The Metropolitan police spent £56 per dog in kennelling fees between 1 January and 31 December 1990 because of the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation for pit bulls. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is the police authority for the metropolis, I hope that he will be kind enough to consider those figures.

The Metropolitan police has had to use expensive private kennels while the fate of dogs was determined. Would it not be better to include in any fine imposed by the court the cost of kennelling the dog pending determination. of its fate?

According to clause 3(1), if a dog is out of control in a public place, the owner

"is guilty of an offence"

and is liable, according to clause 3(3)(b),

"on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both."

How would the Crown prosecution service deal with such offences given the present contraints on its financial resources? The service's policy of reducing aggravated to non-aggravated offences causes me to speculate that there might be a problem. In invite my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to compare with the offences provided for in the Bill the issue that has arisen over the reduction of aggravated bodily harm to common assault in many cases where a person has been charged with assaulting a police officer. If the CPS is obliged, for financial reasons, to mitigate a charge under clause 3(3)(b), the clause may transpire to be relatively toothless.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shersby: I have nearly finished, and no doubt my hon. Friend will make his contribution if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I welcome the fact that by 30 November the Bill will be full in force and that the exemption scheme will be introduced in the meantime. I am sure that the result will be greater protection for the public and for the police from savage attacks by these ferocious dogs. I am grateful for the prompt action that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Clearly many hon. Members want to take part in the debate. Brief speeches would be very much appreciated.

8.14 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I will try to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some hon. Members have given the impression that dogs are dangerous only when they bite. People who are nervous when dogs are around them can be deeply upset and their day may be spoiled if, in the course of their business, a dog barks loudly and runs towards them. In Glasgow, I have often seen a great big alsatian running towards someone and the owner has shouted, "It's all right. It won't touch you." I dare say such things have been said elsewhere in the country as well.

The Home Secretary said that the registration scheme would cost about £20 million. Is he aware that uncontrolled dogs cost millions around the country? We have in Glasgow some of the finest parks in the world. When I was a boy, you could go to the park and the park warden would shout at someone if a dog was not on a lead.

Nowadays, parents avoid taking their young children to parks. They may be in a play area with their children for only five minutes and a pit bull terrier or other large dog may enter that area. Because of the publicity that those dogs have received, parents remove their children from a potentially dangerous situation. It is dangerous not only because of the risk of being bitten, but because dogs are allowed to urinate and do their business in areas where young children are supposed to play. There must be a monetary loss if parks are properly maintained, but the only people who enter them are dog owners.

The Minister responsible for housing in Scotland and the other Scottish Ministers will claim that there is no need for the local authority to build new housing in Glasgow because there is plenty of housing to go round. Ministers know full well that on some housing estates in Glasgow, the people are ashamed of the dirt and filth around them. One of the reasons why people want to get out of those estates is that dogs can wander around them and do what they want.

There is a tradition of terraced housing in England. However, imagine a tenement building with a large dog on the premises. The dog has no idea that he is supposed to allow other people to get into their flats. That dog is territorial, and he will attack any stranger approaching the tenement. People may have their flats in the tenement looking like palaces, but there is dirt and filth in the entrance.

I was brought up in a Glasgow slum, and it sickens me to see houses that are only 30 years old being demolished. One of the causes of that is that we have allowed dogs to run out of control.

I have tabled an amendment about multi-occupation. I hope that the Minister of State will be able to reassure us that, when he talks about dogs in public, "public" means the foyers, lifts and staircases of multi-storey flats, deck access buildings and tenement buildings. Some of the so-called barrack-room lawyers will say, "Well, my dog has to be controlled on the pavement, but once it gets inside the tenement building or multi-storey flat, we can do what we want."

I am amazed when I hear people say that the problem is not the dog but the bad owner. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred to the bad owner and a dog which could be regarded as a lethal weapon. A loaded and primed machine gun will harm no one unless a bad owner sets it off. The same applies to dogs. No one has anything against dogs, but we know that if dogs are put into the wrong hands they can cause much bother.

The Scottish Special Housing Association in my constituency restricted dogs, and its multi-storeyed flats are a pleasure to live in. I do not wish to criticise the district council, but the lifts in some of its multi-storeyed flats are getting old. We are down to one lift in a multi-storeyed building. Men and women who regularly pay their rent have to step into a lift to go up 17 storeys, and they must share that lift with a pit bull terrier or a rottweiler. I have written to the housing department saying that I could not believe my eyes when, on the 18th floor of a multi-storeyed building, a great dane came into the lift. If tenants and dog owners are inconsiderate, I see no reason why the House should not do something about it.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) mentioned the police in New York, but at least they have guns. I do not want that to happen here, but the only line of defence for police in Glasgow, London and other cities are fire extinguishers. Apparently, they disorient dogs. If drugs, for example, are not found in a house, the owner could charge a police officer with causing undue suffering to a poor animal.

The legislation is long overdue. We should have dealt with the matter years ago.

I shall bear in mind what you said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but a postman who was interviewed on television summed up the matter when he said, "This is a good job, which has been wasted by dogs." At a social evening held by electrical trade unions on Friday, electricity meter readers told me that the problem is getting so bad that at least four personnel are being bitten each week. They dread the school holidays. When a child gets up in the morning, his first duty is to open the door and let out the dog. The electricity worker is usually the first to be confronted by that dog.

I have heard what my hon. Friends have said about the legislation being pushed through. In a sense, it is good that it is being pushed through, because it has not allowed the vested interests or the lobbyists to work on various Members of Parliament. At least we are considering the matter based on our constituency experiences.

8.23 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I thank my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for the manner in which he has listened to representations. It saddens me that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), in his churlish attack on my right hon. Friend, found it necessary to chide him for the way in which he has taken on board representations from a large number of people.

In his statement on 22 May, my right hon. Friend made it abundantly plain that he intended to take representations and that he intended to be flexible. He has done exactly that. Throughout the Whitsun recess, my right hon. Friend met representatives of the Joint Association for the Care of Pets in Society, the British Veterinary Association, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He took representations from owners of American pit bull terriers, and even found time to see me and to hear my views as vice-chairman of the all-party animal welfare group.

[Mr. Roger Gale]

My right hon. Friend has produced a Bill that cannot possibly be all things to all people. It is not possible to satisfy both sides in such an emotive argument. The measures that he has brought before the House go a long way towards meeting the needs and concerns of those who own pit bull terriers, those who own other large breeds of dog, and the many members of the general public who are extremely concerned about the manner in which dogs are trained, handled and looked after.

Clause 3 creates the much-needed new offence of permitting dogs to be dangerously out of control in a public place. I was slightly alarmed to hear my right hon. Friend place a caveat on the control of dogs that might cause traffic accidents. It is an absolute fact that, year on year, a large number of accidents are caused as a result of stray dogs—dogs out of control—running amok among traffic. It is probably true that as much injury is caused to human beings as a result of such an incident as is caused by dogs carrying out, for example, the savage and tragic attack about which we have heard so much today.

When I met my right hon. Friend, I suggested that he might look carefully at the age of the handlers of large dogs. I urge him, perhaps before the Bill reaches another place, to reconsider that point. It is an absolute fact that a six-stone dog in the control of a five-stone child will win. It is quite possible for a large dog that is out of control to drag a small child under a truck. Having been hit by a truck, that child will be just as dead as he would be if he had been savaged by the animal.

If my right hon. Friend is to take the powers that clause 2 affords him, he might do well, when designating other breeds, to consider designating that minors should not be allowed to be in control of them in public places. That would be for the protection of the animal, which clearly needs to be kept in control on a leash—it is not enough for an animal to be on a lead—and for the protection of the child concerned.

Clause 3, which provides for magistrates to specify control measures to be applied on complaint that a dog is dangerous will be widely welcomed. The day of the adage that a dog should be allowed one bite is over. It is time that we recognised that the courts must have powers to place controls on individual animals. I am pleased about that, and I believe that the public will also be pleased. The courts will take advantage of that power.

My right hon. Friend has struck the right balance between responsible owners of pit bull terriers, all of whom recognise that they have control of highly dangerous animals, and other owners who are wildly irresponsible and who breed dogs purely for fighting and other unpleasant purposes. I am sure that the majority of people —certainly those pit bull owners who have made representations to me—will accept the restrictions that my right hon. Friend intends to place upon them. They will understand the necessity to phase out the breeds of fighting dogs that are currently available in this country, and they will accept the spirit of compromise that my right hon. Friend has reached.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary deserves not carping criticism but considerable praise from the Opposition. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is not present. It ill behoves him to promote dog registration. My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) led the previous campaign to introduce dog registration. I was privileged to support her in that campaign, and on that occasion we lost by just three votes. Some of us were sad that more than 20 Opposition Members failed to turn up to support us on that occasion. That shows how much they really care about dog registration. This move by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is no more than political opportunism.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: I do not intend to give way to the hon. Gentleman. However, I shall place on record my appreciation of the fact that both he and a number of his hon. Friends support dog registration just as passionately as many Conservative Members. The all-party animal welfare group is just that—an all-party group. Members of Parliament in all parts of the House support its aims. It ill behoves the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to seek to claim this particular measure as his own. The new clause that has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) will, I hope, attract wide support, if there should be a vote upon it.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman has been uncharacteristically unfair. He knows that, both last time and tonight, it was possible for the Opposition, in their own name, to table an amendment to introduce a national dog registration scheme. We deliberately stood aside so that an all-party proposal could be tabled, which we shall support.

Mr. Gale: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but my criticism was of his right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook, who made what I thought was an uncharacteristically carping speech, in which he sought to claim for his own the measures that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has carefully devised; and in which he also sought to criticise the actions that have been taken in the House to introduce dog registration. He must remember that 20 of his hon. Friends failed to support it last time around. This Johnny-cum-latterly approach is not good enough. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was present at the time, but the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook had to concede earlier in the debate that he had voted against dog registration.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has recognised, in the orders that he intends to introduce under clause 1, the need not for, in his words, a national dog registration scheme—which is what many people would like—but for the licensing of a particularly dangerous breed of dog, if any of those dogs are to be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend has recognised the need for such a scheme. At the very least, the House should recognise that a dangerous dog is every bit as dangerous as a shotgun. It is necessary to license a shotgun, although it is unnecessary to license an air rifle.

Again I say to my right hon. Friend—I have put it to him privately on a previous occasion—that, if he is prepared to return to the House later tonight and say that he is willing, under the powers contained in clause 2, not to consider licensing but definitely to license those dogs that he designates, I for one will be satisfied. If he is not prepared to do that, I am sure that he will understand me when I say that I shall most certainly support my hon. Friend's amendment. I believe that some form of

registration is necessary. However, I emphasise that the overriding need is for the licensing of dangerous dogs. If we can achieve that, we shall have achieved a great deal.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend recognise that some hon. Members would vote against Second Reading if my right hon. Friend were to return to the House and say that he was prepared to license the dogs that he had designated?

Mr. Gale: That is a matter for my right hon. and hon. Friends to consider.

With my proviso about the omission of a registration scheme that many of us would like introduced, I believe that the Bill will help to control dangerous dogs, and will also make a major contribution to animal welfare. I am therefore grateful to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for having introduced it.

8.34 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): This Bill has been needed for some time. There has been widespread concern about the growing number of attacks by ferocious dogs in places frequented by the public, although, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) said, not always so clearly in public. None the less, they terrify members of the public. The girl aged 12 in Scotland, who was referred to earlier—Kelly Lynch—was killed by two rottweilers. That case did not lead to the introduction of the legislation that some people considered necessary even then. The Bill has been introduced in response to a peculiarly horrifying attack upon another girl, this time in Bradford, which mercifully did not result in her death—but only just.

The Bill may come to be regarded as more significant for what it provides generally than for what it provides for specific breeds of fighting dogs. The proposed new offence in clause 3, that of permitting a dog of any breed to be dangerously out of control in a public place, may in time prove more significant than the provisions for designation in clause 1. I welcome the fact that the Government have decided to take action about fighting breeds of dogs, but there are major definition problems. We shall need to be watchful. Attempts will undoubtedly be made to import cross-breed fighting dogs that fall outside the scope of the provisions in clause 1.

The breeding of dogs for fighting is a covert trade. The associated ugly business of dealing in such dogs is carried on with the intention of concealing, as far as possible, what is being done. It will not be easy to adopt a piecemeal approach—by designating from time to time particular breeds or part-breeds as they come to be perceived to be the particular menace.

None the less, the Home Secretary was right to abandon his initial proposal that all dogs of the specified breeds should be put down. That would have been unenforceable and would have aroused a backlash of public opinion that would have defeated the purpose of the measure. To neuter, muzzle and impose heavy fines on those who do not conform with the law is a common-sense approach that should be welcomed.

The principal requirement, which I welcome—that owners of specified dangerous breeds should carry third party insurance—seems to me, however, not to have been practically worked out with the insurance industry. The Government should talk in particular to the Association of British Insurers about the practical consequences of the proposal. There are considerable doubts about whether insurance companies will be prepared to insure the specified breeds.

It is true, as my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, that normal household cover includes dogs, but the more dangerous the dog the more difficult it is to obtain cover. I should like to hear what consultations the Minister of State, Home Office—the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold)—has had with insurance companies about the problems that they envisage in extending insurance effectively.

The Bill's insurance requirements are limited. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I would like the requirement of third party insurance extended to cover all dogs. We must recognise that, although the more spectacular attacks recently have been by dangerous breeds, dogs kept for other purposes have badly wounded in many attacks. The figures produced for the metropolis show that many dogs that are bred to provide guide dogs for the blind—alsatians being widely used for that purpose—are among the most dangerous dogs. Such dogs should be covered by compulsory third party arrangements.

Breed is not the critical issue, because mongrels rank third or fourth among those dogs responsible for damage and for serious attacks. We submit that the insurance requirements should cover ownership of any dog. The duties of ownership will not be properly discharged unless one point is driven home much more forcefully than the Government have done in this debate and more forcefully than has been demonstrated in their approach to the problem. For that reason, we strongly believe that the time is right to introduce a nationwide registration scheme.

The Bill is seriously defective, even within its limited scope. Admittedly, it does not attempt to deal with many of the problems arising from dog ownership—for example, the fouling of pathways and the difficulty of keeping pathways open for use by young children, to which the hon. Member for Springburn referred. The ambit of the Bill is narrow—it is designed to deal with attacks on members of the public by savage dogs. It would be strengthened by a dog registration scheme, bringing home to owners their duty to keep their dogs under control and enabling evidence to be produced, where they fail to do so, that they are responsible for their dogs, whether through ownership or through possession.

Such a scheme can be administered. We have had licence schemes this century for longer than we have not. It should be possible for a licence scheme to be administered by local authorities. The police are already heavily overburdened and, although there should be full consultation with them, it is eminently suitable to set up a scheme financed by a registration fee given to local authorities to enforce dog control, to provide education and to implement an anti-fouling policy. Such a scheme has been recommended by a number of local authority associations and would be workable.

Additional resources will be needed if local authorities are to operate effectively. Only about half the local authorities have dog wardens. There will be opportunities later, in the debate on the cross-party new clause and on the new clause tabled by my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends to introduce a registration scheme, to consider the arguments in greater detail. The Bill's defects do not detract from the importance of enacting it as soon as possible, so we shall vote for it.

8.44 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): During the statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I intervened to say that I was extremely pleased that he was taking measures in favour of responsible ownership of dogs. That was due to an unfortunate incident in my constituency—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) referred—when a family pet savaged a small child in Yardley Wood. It was not a pit bull terrier but a Staffordshire bull terrier, and it had never previously shown any signs of aggression. I therefore particularly welcome those clauses relating to responsible ownership and control of dogs.

I should like in particular to concur with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who criticised the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). The right hon. Gentleman's gratuitous attack on my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was totally uncalled for and was the worst possible example of politics coming before principles. I should particularly like to quote the right hon. Gentleman's comments on rottweilers on 22 May 1991, when he asked:

"Why are rottweilers not to be included in the prohibited category?"

It seems from the right hon. Gentleman's comments today that he has changed his position. Surely it is therefore extremely hypocritical of the right hon. Gentleman to criticise my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who has consulted widely and moved totally in keeping with his remarks on 22 May, when he said:

"If dogs can be made safe by neutering, I shall be prepared to consider it."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 946-49.]

That is exactly what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has done—he has considered the matter and acted upon it. The criticism by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and certain elements of the press is not only distasteful but, in the opinion of my constituents, uncalled for.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) pinpointed the fact that clause 3 may be the most lasting contribution on the issue. It is extremely important in terms of controlling dogs that are dangerously out of control in a public place. I differ, however, with the hon. Gentleman and with my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North in that I believe that that has nothing to do with registration.

There are tower blocks in my constituency where dogs roam around untended and make it extremely difficult to get into those flats. Registration would make no difference to that; the only thing that would make a difference—if my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary considered it necessary or if local authorities believed it necessary in the future—would be measures to ensure that all dogs in public places, not designated as parks, were kept on a lead. That would make those areas safe. It would be the answer to the complaints by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin)—it would refer equally to his tenement blocks and to my tower blocks. A registration scheme would have no effect on those dogs.

I have had great pleasure in owning as a family pet a bulldog—a breed which some people may consider to have been dangerous in the past and which was originally bred for fighting. I am therefore well aware of the care and attention that is necessary if one owns such a breed. I paid great attention to ensuring that that dog was on a lead whenever I was in a public place, not because I thought that the dog would attack anybody—I knew that it was perfectly friendly—but because I was worried that other people might be frightened by its appearance. I knew that if it was kept on a lead it could not cause anybody else any inconvenience or distress. That is my response to the particular comments by the hon. Member for Springburn.

References to puppy farming are somewhat irrelevant to this debate. The real problems of pit bull terriers and the dangerous dogs that have been responsible for the attacks have nothing to do with puppy farming. It is unfortunate that some dogs have had certain characteristics repeatedly bred into their strain. They include pit bull terriers, tosas, alsatians, rottweilers and dobermans. Some dogs are bred specifically, using an aggressive dog and an aggressive bitch, to produce a more aggressive animal. It is to those dogs that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has correctly addressed the Bill. Unfortunately, there will always be instances of the family pet—or somebody else's family pet—deciding, for no apparent reason, to sink his teeth into some poor——

Mr. Tony Banks: Unsuspecting Tory candidate.

Mr. Hargreaves: Let us just say, into some poor, unsuspecting passerby.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and other hon. Members have expressed the view that certain types of dog are as dangerous as a loaded firearm, saying, "We need a certificate and to be registered to own a firearm." I have often ridden or been in close proximity to horses that I would describe as being every bit as dangerous as the breeds of dog to which we have referred tonight. The House is not, however, talking about establishing a registration system for horses. I have known people whose faces have been dreadfully disfigured by horses bucking or kicking and being out of control in a public place. People have even been killed by horses, but we are not talking about every type of horse being registered. That is because registration cannot make any difference to an animal's behaviour. Responsible ownership—from the horse rider or the dog owner—is what really counts.

I believe that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) who suggested that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary should reconsider the question of minors being in control of certain dogs in public places. The same could be said about horses. Any animal that is out of control poses a potential danger, not only to itself but to people. It is a potential accident spot. Any animal in a public place that is controlled solely by a minor must also fall within that category.

I am certain that my right hon. Friend will wish further to consider those points. As we have been asked to be brief, I shall draw my remarks to a close by saying that I wholeheartedly support the Bill and urge my right hon. Friend not to allow this issue to be clouded by talk of a registration scheme.

8.53 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): When he opened this debate, the Home Secretary would have had the House believe that the Government have acted decisively and swiftly over the problem of trying to control dangerous dogs. That is also what we were told on the afternoon of the savage attack on young Rucksana Khan.

We heard that the Home Secretary had been on the telephone to the Prime Minister to demand urgent action to control dangerous dogs. He is reported to have told the Prime Minister, "We cannot wait. There must be a Bill this Session". He might have added, "We are taking a right mauling in the tabloid press in a possible general election year and must be seen to be doing something."

I do not know whether that is what happened, but I know that more than two years ago my constituent, Kellie Lynch, was killed in a savage attack by two rottweilers. Ever since, her parents, Veronica and John Lynch, have campaigned courageously and ceaselessly to try to get the Government to take some action to prevent what happened to their daughter from happening to anyone else's children. I also know that their campaign has been ignored and dismissed by the Government and their Ministers, at least one of whom showed what could only be described "measured contempt" when dealing with those parents' legitimate demands.

I well remember the Adjournment debate in which I participated almost exactly two years ago and the comments of the Minister, who said that banning or prohibiting particular breeds of dog was "manifest nonsense", "rubbish", "unsustainable" and "an absurdity". He added that a ban or prohibition on American pit bull terriers

"cannot operate because it is nonsense if one focuses on breeds . . . it is impossible to prohibit possession and importation by way of breed,"—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1989; Vol. 154, c.1200.]

What was impossible then has suddenly become all too possible now.

Mr. Tony Banks: Who was the Minister?

Mr. McAllion: It was the hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is now at the Foreign Office.

Clause 1 not only prohibits the possession of fighting dogs and bans their breeding and sale, but specifies the dogs by breed in the statute. That is the very thing that the Government told us was nonsensical rubbish only a short time ago. Anyone who does not accept that argument need only read clause 1(1)(a), which refers to

"any dog of the type known as the pit bull terrier",

or clause 1(1)(b), which refers to

"any dog of the type known as the Japanese tosa".

The Home Secretary has admitted that there are problems when trying to define dogs by breed and has promised that he will issue guidelines on identification to dog wardens and police. The Bill uses the more general description of "pit bull terrier" rather than the more specific breeding term of "American pit bull terrier". However, whichever way he dodges and weaves, the right hon. Gentleman cannot escape from the reality, which is that he is now doing exactly what the Government said only two years ago could not be done.

Mr. Tony Banks: The whole House will acknowledge the foresight that was displayed by my hon. Friend in his Adjournment debate, to which I listened, and will remember the comments made by the then Minister, the hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who I understand is now probably on his way back from Beirut, having been recalled. Does my hon. Friend agree that, having said what he did to him, the hon. and learned Member for Grantham deserved to be sent to Beirut, and is not it outrageous that he is now being called back from Beirut to vote in favour of something that he previously opposed?

Mr. MacAllion: My hon. Friend is correct. I am sure that taxpayers will be interested to know that the Government are spending thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money to bring back a Minister to Westminster to vote for a Bill that he considers to be rubbish.

Why has there been such a dramatic change in the Government's position? Could it be that in the aftermath of the horrific attack on young Rucksana Khan the Government suddenly realised that they were faced with a breed of dog that posed a threat that has been described by the Home Secretary as one of a different degree of seriousness from that presented to them hitherto? Has there been a sudden awakening on the part of those who occupy the Government Benches to the threat that is posed by the American pit bull terrier? I think not.

First, the Government were well warned—I played my part in the Adjournment debate to which I referred—that American pit bull terriers posed a serious threat to public safety in the United Kingdom. The Government knew at least two years ago that the breed had killed and killed again in the United States. They knew then that the Kennel Club had advised its members not to deal with and not to own examples of the breed. The Government knew that American pit bull terriers were bred to encourage fighting characteristics, to bring down even a horse and not to let go of the victim until they had killed it. They knew all that at least two years ago, but they chose to ignore the facts and to dismiss calls for bans and prohibitions to be placed on the breed.

The attack on young Rucksana Khan cannot be said to have come as a surprise to the Government. They knew well the potential of American pit bull terriers, and they cannot explain their sudden shift in attitude towards the ban that is set out in the Bill. It is not credible for Ministers to argue that the sheer ferocity of attacks in recent times has convinced them of the need to change their policy. No more ferocious attack has taken place in this country than that which occurred in my constituency more than two years ago. If there is a need for urgency and speed now, why was not there a similar move two years ago when my constituent was attacked?

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does the hon. Gentleman think that it may have been in part because of his persuasive approach and the fact that he has applied himself assiduously to trying to deal with the problem—we all respect him for that—that the Government have introduced the Bill? Perhaps he should regard the introduction of the Bill as in part an achievement for himself.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman entirely misunderstands the argument which I have advanced. The most persuasive arguments were presented by Mr. and Mrs. John Lynch, who made forceful representations for more than two years that action should be taken. It is unfortunate that they were ignored by Ministers.

Why has there been a change in the Government's attitude and why have they introduced the Bill? It is my judgment that the Bill reflects the relative strength of the Government two years ago and the relative weakness of their position today. Two years ago, the then Prime

[Mr. McAllion]

Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), was celebrating 10 years in office. The talk then was of 10 more years of Conservative Government. Two years ago, the poll tax had not even hit Scotland, never mind England and Wales. At that time the deep divisions within the Tory party over Europe had not really come to the surface. If I might borrow a phrase that was coined by another, two years ago the Government thought themselves to be unassailable.

In their arrogance, the Government dismissed demands for more controls to be placed on dangerous dogs. They did not think that the demands were worth bothering about. They used the opportunities that were presented by debates on the control of dangerous dogs to mock those of us who called for stricter legislation. They did not bother to listen to us. It is a different story now. Ministers have left the Government by the barrowload, including the former Prime Minister. The Government are trailing in the opinion polls and they have had first to postpone a June general election and then an October election because they knew that they would not be able to win either.

The Government are politically weak and they are vulnerable. It is from their position of weakness that they have been bounced into introducing the Bill because of the pressure mounted by the tabloid newspapers. In short, the Bill represents the Government's panic reaction. It will be pushed through the House in one day not because the Government are legislating for a real emergency in the real world but because they, a weak Administration, cannot guarantee the unequivocal support of Conservative Back-Benchers. That being so, they want to push through the Bill in one day, with the minimum of damage to themselves.

By any reasonable definition, the Bill is not good enough. It includes no provision for a national dog registration scheme. It does not provide for an adequate licence fee to fund appropriate wardens' schemes throughout the country. It ducks the issues of ownership of the breeds that it defines as presenting a serious danger to the public. Anyone will still be able to own any of the dogs in any sort of home environment once the Bill is on the statute book. The Bill does not seek to deal with back-street breeders who wish to sell especially dangerous dogs to all and sundry, including those who cannot possibly be considered as responsible owners. The Bill includes no provisions to bear on dangerous dogs that are used for criminal purposes, especially drug dealing.

However, a number of amendments and new clauses have been tabled and if they are carried, they will strengthen the Bill considerably. That being so, I shall support the Bill's Second Reading. I do so because it recognises that some breeds of dog cannot be classified as domestic pets, but should be banned in this country. I do so because it recognises other breeds of dogs that present a serious danger to the public and that require special measures to control them.

The Bill does not go anywhere near far enough, but in time that will come just as, in time, the Government will go and will be replaced by a Government who will treat the problem with the seriousness it deserves.

9.4 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I listened to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) with a great deal of interest. He has a message for the House, but it was a pity that it was obscured by so much of what one might call politicking in criticising the Government and their reaction to a problem which has grown over the past few years.

No Government can instantly introduce laws until they are absolutely convinced that they are necessary for the well-being of the people. Creating new measures on the spur of the moment does not make for good law. This Bill is a result of a year or two's reflection on a concern which has grown in importance over that period.

I support the Bill, although I preferred my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's earlier proposal for, if one can use the word, a cull of pit bull terriers. That would have received widespread support. The newspapers, if one goes by what they said, were generally in favour of that treatment for that breed of dog. It cannot be considered a pet in any conceivable way. However, I accept that my right hon. Friend has reflected at length and that he has taken opinion from various sources and has therefore decided not to embark on such an extreme measure.

There are points that I should like clarified. The proposed treatment for pit bull terriers when they appear in a public place is to be welcomed. They will be muzzled and kept on a lead. That does not mean that they need to be muzzled in the home and that is my main fear. If such dogs are bred for violence—I do not think that anybody would dispute that—they are liable to turn on people. What are we doing to protect people in the households in which those dogs live? What would happen if the dogs were allowed into the garden and escaped? They would still be a danger if they got out. I am not sure that there are any proposals in the Bill that require owners to ensure that their gardens are secure if they keep such a dog at home. I should welcome further thoughts on that matter.

The definition of a public place, as in clause 3, is always notoriously difficult to devise. I remember that in the Road Traffic Bill, the law was changed to make dangerous driving an offence either on the public highway or in a public place. However, when it came to the definition of a public place, one could not be sure what was meant. I discovered that if the effects of the Bill had been carried through logically, it would have banned all international car rallying events through Forestry Commission roads. They are a public place by virtue of the fact that the public has access to them.

Although we tend to think of a public place as a recreation ground or a local authority park, what would happen if the owners of the dogs took them into the countryside, far away from what the owners considered to be a public place, and allow them to roam over fields? They are also public places because the public has access to them through the public's rights of way. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to consider carefully whether a public place should include everywhere outside the domestic home so that there would be no doubt at all. To define "public place" in legal terms is very difficult indeed.

Reference has been made to the possible introduction of a dog registration scheme—something which we shall discuss in Committee. I am opposed to such a scheme because I cannot envisage its working effectively. In my

constituency, I see rows upon rows of cars with out-of-date vehicle excise licences. There are also many people who do not have television licences. A great deal of time and energy are spent on the collection of television licence fees. The point is that if someone taxes his car, that does not mean that that car has been adequately maintained. If a dog registration scheme were introduced, that would not mean that the owner would look after his dog and ensure that it did not misbehave in a public place, whatever we mean by that.

There would also be enormous problems in policing such a scheme. The sort of people who do not have vehicle excise licences or television licences are the very people who would not go to the time and trouble of applying for a dog registration licence. If such a person decided that he no longer wanted his dog, he would simply remove the tag from around its neck and throw the dog out of the house or drive it into the countryside and release it.

The Bill will re-emphasise to the public that having a dog means taking responsibility for that dog's life. The Bill goes some considerable way towards warning people that it is a commitment that must not be taken lightly. The law can go only so far; it is for each owner to exercise his responsibility for the conduct of his dog.

I shall support the Bill because it goes a long way towards ensuring that there is greater accountability for the ownership and control of dogs.

9.11 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) that dogs and shotguns were equally dangerous. That was a considerable insult to shotguns. We can leave down a loaded gun, and it will not do anybody any harm. It can stay there for 100 years, and unless some fool or madman starts shooting people with it, it will do no one any harm.

The dogs with which the Bill is designed to deal are a different proposition because they have, at best, addled brains. They are highly mobile, very strong, and move of their own volition to attack anyone or anyting that comes within their vision. The hon. Member who referred to those shotguns should also have mentioned the ill-considered Firearms (Amendment) Bill, which was introduced shortly after the Hungerford massacre. That was another piece of legislation introduced in panic. It was ill-considered and it has achieved nothing.

Mr. Frank Cook: That Bill was also guillotined.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman was the Labour Whip on the Committee that considered that Bill. He will recall the long arguments in Committee and the wisdom that emerged as a result of them. The Government learned a lesson with that Bill, which is why this Bill is being rushed through in one day. There will be no time for rational discussion of the issues. It is ridiculous that such a serious matter should be dealt with in that way.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) made a powerful speech. A child in his constituency was killed two years ago. There should have been a great deal of consideration during those two years, but there was not. That is proof positive that this is a rushed Bill, introduced in panic and designed to do only a little good. A great deal of ill-will will be felt by the law-abiding owners of the dogs that come within the scope of the Bill.

If I may be sarcastic, it seems to me that we are faced with the Bill because of Government dogma. They are unwilling to consider a dog licensing scheme. As we are all well aware, one part of the United Kingdom has a comprehensive dog licensing scheme under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983—Northern Ireland. Despite the Government's views, which were expressed when we last discussed the problem of dogs, that scheme has considerable support in Northern Ireland from those who deal with the licensing of dogs. It is one of the most welcome measures for Northern Ireland that the House has passed for many years.

Frankly, the dog licensing scheme in Northern Ireland works as well as the councils that are operating it make it work. It does not cost much money, except in places where it is not properly operated. One of the councils in my area, Coleraine, manages to make the scheme pay for itself. Ballymena council charges £5 a dog, and made a profit on one year.

No one would say that the scheme is perfect, but it has largely dealt with the evils for which it was intended, principally sheep worrying. Although in Northern Ireland the number of sheep has multiplied by three since the scheme came into operation, the number of sheep-worrying incidents has decreased. In my own council, Limavady, which had a large number of sheep-worrying incidents, there was only one incident last year and none the previous two or three years. That is a measure of the success of the scheme and of its capacity to control stray dogs, so it does work.

Although councils vary in their efficiency, in the amount of manpower they require and in the cost of the scheme, it is broadly a success. If the courts in Northern Ireland were more helpful by giving the penalties that the law allows, the scheme would be even more successful.

I do not want to take up too much time, because my points apply to Northern Ireland, but if the Government had simply reprinted that legislation with a few necessary amendments, they would have had a much better Bill. I never know how amendements are chosen for discussion in Committee, but my amendment was unfortunately not selected. If the Government had accepted my sensible amendment, and not extended the Bill to Northern Ireland —that flies in the face of the normal view of the Unionist party—but amended the Northern Ireland legislation, we would have been even further ahead of the rest of the United Kingdom.

My suggestions were quite simple. A person who did not hold, for the period of the dog's licence, insurance to cover any damage done by the dog should not be granted the licence. The Government believe in the market, so surely they should have no problem in accepting such a simply amendment or writing it into the Bill. If they did so, the dachshund, which is a small dog, would be in group 1 —to use a motoring analogy—and the pit bull terrier would be in group 20. Not many people would be willing to pay the insurance costs. If they were, we might have to ask why they were prepared to do so.

I am essentially a farmer, and I believe that if a dog does not earn its keep, the owner should not keep it. I appreciate that people like to have dogs as pets; we have had pet dogs in my home. However, I stand by that principle: if a dog does not earn its keep, do not keep it. People who keep a dog should expect it to earn its keep if it is carrying a high level of insurance.

[Mr. Ross]

The second small change that I should like to see is for the district council—which is the licensing authority in Northern Ireland—to have the power to grant or to refuse a licence. If that power were exercised wisely and well, it would deal with the problem once and for all, because the council could react to local pressure. That would also cover the problem raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) in respect of high-rise flats. A council could exercise control in that regard as well. If we had followed that route, we would be in a much happier situation than we are this evening.

I hope that the Bill will prove to be purely temporary and that the United Kingdom will eventually catch up with the existing practice in Northern Ireland. I had hoped that I could improve on the legislation, but sadly that has not proved possible. However, hope springs eternal in the human breast, even in regard to dog registration, so with a wee bit of luck, we will be back here in another year or two, whoever may be in government, when we will perhaps have wiser counsels and better legislation.

9.20 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I listened with interest to the comments of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), and particularly to his remarks about insuring dogs according to their breed and to where they live. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) rightly highlighted the importance of clause 3 and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) emphasised the importance of enforcing tenancy rules. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will give great consideration in her response to the points made by hon. Members in all parts of the House about common parts, which may include estate roads, and the corridors and stairwells of high-rise blocks such as those in my constituency.

Almost every hon. Member who owns a dog has confessed to it. I almost feel that we should extend the Register of Members' Interests to our pets. I admit to the ownership of a border terrier and shall watch with great interest the progress of the Bill tonight. Most of us in this country are dog lovers, although I detect the odd shake of the head from members of the Opposition Front Bench. I record also my interest in Battersea dogs home, which does so much for the welfare of strays and of dogs that have been ill-treated or abused by their owners.

I believe that right hon. and hon. Members faithfully represent the broad balance of views held by their constituents. That ranges from the school of thought that dogs can do no wrong to that referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), which can be described as the incinerator tendency—those who exhibit real hostility towards dogs. In between, there are those who are irritated by dog fouling and concerned about the health risks that it creates, as well as the risk posed by dogs wandering the streets out of control. They are concerned also about the dangers that are created when dogs are kept in the wrong types of places.

I understand entirely when people get a large dog to protect themselves, but when they bring such an animal home to their high-rise flat and then allow it to run wild in the corridors, or allow it to become a latchkey dog, such people contribute to neurosis in a dog, which can lead to the dangers that concern us tonight.

There are also killer dogs. The Bill is concerned particularly with measures to control fighting dogs that are sadly and too frequently the killers not just of other dogs but of people. All dogs can be dangerous, and some often are. One or two breeds—the number may be higher—are not only trained but bred to be dangerous. The Bill goes the right way about dealing with those bred for that purpose—they are not the sort of dogs that should be kept as pets.

I have been involved in a number of animal issues in the House—none more important than the measures taken to stop dog fighting. When one prevents dog fighting one is conscious that the dogs may go somewhere else, and if they go into family ownership or are bred from they can contribute to the problems that we face.

Just about every animal welfare organisation agrees that fighting dogs should not be pets. They can turn into aggressive killers without warning—we have seen too many examples of that. It is right to phase them out, but it is also right to take the lesser option and deal with them by muzzling, by neutering and through the exemption and registration introduced in the Bill.

I wish my right hon. and hon. Friends—and, indeed, the lawyers of this country—well in seeking to define the breeds and types of dog covered by the Bill. No doubt they will be able to do it. I especially welcome the insurance measures.

I emphasise that, in taking the lesser step, we must also take the responsibility for doing so. If there should be a tragedy with an exempted dog it will be no good our turning round and saying that it is the Government's fault, that something more should have been done. We are advising the Government that we want the lesser step to be taken; I think that we are right to do so, but we must acknowledge that we are also taking the responsibility for that step.

The Bill also deals with other types of dog. Other breeds can be dangerous—sometimes because of overbreeding or inbreeding, sometimes because of their ownership. The insurance route is the right way forward, because the actuarial calculations will be made by insurance companies. If they deem somebody not to be a fit and proper person to own or control a dog, or if they consider somebody's home not to be a fit and proper place for that dog to live, they will either refuse insurance cover or make it so expensive that it will be almost impossible for the person in question to take out insurance.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary included insurance as an element in the list of requirements that he will introduce by regulation—with which I entirely concur. But I did not hear him say that there would be marking of the dog, a collar tag or something similar so that the public, the police and other authorities could easily see that insurance had been taken out. That is an important consideration and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will deal with it when she replies to the debate.

The debate will soon move on to the question of registration schemes. I make no secret of the fact that I have always supported registration schemes. Indeed, in the days when such things were possible, my first revolt in the House, when I went into the other Lobby, was when I supported the measure to retain dog licences. I favoured registration for two reasons. The first was that registration

serves a purpose in rescuing strays. I still believe that. Battersea dogs home runs a voluntary scheme whereby a chip is implanted in the scruff of the dog's neck, giving a unique number that can be screened in police stations to identify the dog's owner. Perhaps we could encourage that practice through voluntary schemes.

The other consideration is owner control—the control of owners who act irresponsibly in charge of dogs. On that matter, I believe that we are heading in the right direction. Whatever we like to call it, we are heading down the route of compulsory insurance for dogs. We are starting with fighting dogs, but I believe that we will continue with dangerous dogs and then it will be a short step before we bring it in for other dogs.

All dogs can be dangerous and some often are. We are going for the "often-are's" and shortly I believe that the Government will be persuaded to go for the "also-can-be's". Before we get there, we will have achieved precisely that responsible dog ownership that we are seeking, through the insurance route, which will be in the best interests of dogs and their owners.

I support the Bill and I urge that we eventually extend the insurance requirement, because this nation can be judged by the way in which it deals with its pets, especially dogs. The Bill will be good for people and good for dogs, and I commend it.

9.30 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I shall be brief. When the debates on the Bill started today, I had no intention of voting in the No Lobby against the timetable. However, I have heard a number of speeches, one or two of which certainly lacked clarity, in which preposterous comments were made. However, because of the lack of clarity, I cannot ascertain exactly what was said until *Hansard* appears and it will not appear until after the Bill has completed its passage.

That problem was again demonstrated during the Home Secretary's speech, when he appeared to select brindle Staffordshire bull terriers for attention. Perhaps the Home Secretary is not aware that there are a variety of colours within that breed and that his comments will cause some anxiety among those who fancy pedigree dogs, especially Staffordshire bull terriers, because he appeared to like brindle Staffordshire bull terriers but not others. It is rather sad that in a matter that affects the burning interests of many thousands of people—the Staffordshire bull terrier is one of the most popular breeds in Britain —the Home Secretary's lack of preparedness should cause him to give anxiety.

Because of the atmosphere of rush and panic, a number of hon. Members who are interested in dogs are increasingly concerned. After all, the Home Secretary criticised a Labour Government for not banning American pit bull terriers in the 1970s. However, at that time it was only surmised that they would be coming here to be used for fighting, which did not develop until the early 1980s. As I said in an intervention on the Leader of the House, I asked the Government to ban the import of American pit bull terriers in the early 1980s, because evidence was clearly available to show that they were being used for the very sordid practice of dog fighting, to which a number of hon. Members have referred.

The Government refused and I urged them that if they were not prepared to ban the import of American pit bull terriers, they should at least have the decency to assist animal welfare organisations, especially those that have an investigative role such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, by informing them of the names and addresses of people who were importing the dogs. Make no mistake, people who were importing American pit bull terriers at the beginning and in the middle of the 1980s were almost invariably serving dog fighting.

Once again the Government refused because that clashed with their philosophy, which is to sweep away regulations and leave everything to the individual, to the free market, to freedom and liberty. The result of that careless, lackadaisical and utterly irresponsible approach is the panic stations represented by a Bill of this type.

I do not want to take a long time but one or two matters need to be mentioned. I would be grateful if the Minister of State would first clarify the issue that I mentioned regarding Staffordshire bull terriers before people start having them neutered all around the country. Secondly, there is the question of clause 4. It is already unsatisfactory that people who are not fit to have dogs, who abuse them and are found guilty of relevant offences in court may not be banned from keeping a dog. That is provided by clause 4.

However, sometimes other people in the same household should be banned from keeping a dog. When the police arrive at the home of the chap who has obtained a pit bull terrier for unsavoury reasons, he will say that it is his wife's, his partner's, his son's or his mother or father's. They will be banned from keeping a dog, but he will not. There has been too much of such evasion, so we must ensure that the verdict of the court is accompanied by bans that mean something and by a household ban where necessary.

The Government have been foolish in saying that the Bill will not come into effect until 30 November. I estimate that a significant proportion of at least 45 per cent. of pit bull terrier bitches in Britain—that is 45 per cent. of the total, as bitches come into season twice a year—will be mated within the next two or three months to produce litters suitably matched to dogs of other breeds. That will allow people who practice this so-called sport of fighting to evade the requirement in the Bill.

Banning pit bull terriers will be of little use if cross-breeds from American pit bull terriers are to be used. The Government are giving the dog-fighting fraternity the latitude offered by the time arrangements of the Bill. That is another example of the incompetence and stupidity with which they have handled the matter in the past decade.

9.36 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): We all know how much people in the United Kingdom love pets. Nowhere is the British love of animals more demonstrated that in our continuing affection for dogs and cats.

It is a correct belief that dogs and cats are good for us —people in hospital who have pets with them are known to recover more quickly, their blood pressure lowers, they are happier and calmer and they recover more quickly. We are all aware of the quiet companionship that a pet offers someone who lives alone. A mentally handicapped child is

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

stimulated and made happier by a pet. Someone who is dying is made happier by the company of an animal. We are right to love our pets and they repay us a thousandfold.

Most people look after their pets—often better than they look after themselves—and give them the finest food. I have often thought that pearls before swine was surely the description of an early porcine hors d'oeuvre. Cats dine delicately on boneless salmon, while their owners masticate on mackerel.

But there is another breed of people who seek and obtain another kind of household animal—one bred not to divert but to destroy and not to defend but to go to war. The owners are at fault, but so often their animals must suffer.

The Bill is necessary, but I am sad that we must have a Bill to control household pets. It is a great dishonour on ourselves as human beings that we are not able to choose and care for animals that are good for society rather than a negative element. Yet in my constituency and in many other parts of the United Kingdom, owners have chosen and breed dogs to hurt their neighbours. I have a folder full of such examples just from my constituency.

Where I differ with the Opposition, who have expressed similar concern for animals, is over their grave disservice to the House of suggesting that a register is the perfect way forward. Surely, we do not want unnecessary bureaucracy. A national registration scheme would have to cater for 7 million dogs and would cost about £42 million a year, financed by fees. In Belfast, fewer than 50 per cent. of owners have complied with such a scheme.

There is a concept known as risks management which involves the identification of risks. Are we to go overboard and pretend that there are risks related to dogs? Could not the £42 million be better spent on children, the elderly, the handicapped and the sick? In our love for animals and our overwhelming desire for animals to be well cared for, let us not be too silly. We should consider that people matter, too.

The national budget is, of necessity, finite. The register, such as it is, must be kept to the minimum so that it costs the minimum to maintain and obtains maximum compliance from owners. I support the Bill.

9.42 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I hope that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and the House will forgive me if I do not comment on all that has been said, but I lack the time to do so.

Opposition Members tried to castigate us for—[HON. MEMBERS: "Government Members."] I am sorry, I meant Government Members—I was anticipating events.

Government Members complained that we criticised the Home Secretary for listening and responding. We were doing nothing of the kind, but were saying that it was a pity that he did not do so before he spoke on 22 May. Our complaint was that he spoke first and thought afterwards. The problem with the Home Secretary is that he is never there when the consequences of what he has planned come about. We fear that his rush to legislate will leave problems for his successor.

The Home Secretary himself mentioned the *Sunday People*, so instead of making up what Mr. Mandelson said yesterday, I shall reflect on what the Home Secretary said. In 1981, when he was a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, the Home Secretary regaled the House with the promise that the country would be cabled by 1990. To give him credit, he was the first Minister to see the promise, potential and need for the most modern communication system. It was not introduced, but by then he had gone.

The right hon. Gentleman then went to the Department of the Environment, where he is credited with persuading the then Prime Minister that the poll tax was the best replacement for the rates—that was also mentioned in the *Sunday People*. We all know where that expensive farce ended, but no matter, the right hon. Gentleman had yet again vanished.

The right hon. Gentleman reappeared as Secretary of State for Education and Science to lay the groundwork for what as laughingly known as educational reform, but by the time its consequences hit classroom and teachers, he had vanished. He had legged it to become chairman of the Conservative party. We all remember his clarion call at last year's Conservative party conference:

"Let him who has no stomach for the fight depart."

The Chancellor, the deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House all did so and then, lo and behold, the Prime Minister herself did.

As Robert Harris said in yesterday's *Sunday Times*:

"after talking tough about pit bull terriers for a week or two, our Kenneth has suddenly dropped his bag of toffees and is sprinting for the schoolyard gate as fast as his little legs will carry him. 'It's typical of Ken,' one Tory MP was quoted as saying last week, 'he never finishes anything he starts.'"

That is the right hon. Gentleman's track record; now let us consider his record in relation to dogs. When we consider the brilliant record that the right hon. Gentleman brings with him to the Bill, how can we have any confidence that the Home Secretary, in his latest and perhaps his last Government job, has it right now?

As late as last October, the Government were telling us that nothing more needed to be done in relation to dog control, and that we certainly did not need a national dog registration scheme. They said that the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, which made it an offence to have an unmuzzled, ferocious dog at large in a street, park or open public place was enough to deal with the problem, as the figures showed.

There were 80 prosecutions in 1988, of which 43 succeeded. That shows that the 1847 Act did not quite solve the problem, but a year later there were 93 prosecutions, of which 60 succeeded. Therefore, as the Government then argued, the 1847 Act provided the solution to the problem, and they said that if that did not work there was always the Animals Act 1971, which allows prosecution for injury or damage caused by dogs in England and Wales. I should like to be able to tell the House how that worked out, but I cannot, because the Home Office does not collect information centrally on those civil offences.

A month ago, the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister claimed that all was well and that there was no need for a change in the law. That song has been sung from the Dispatch Box for at least the past two years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) reminded the House tonight, the then Home Office Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and derided a call by my hon. Friend that specific action should be taken against American pit bull terriers. The Minister asked:

"When does an American pit bull terrier cease to be an American pit bull terrier? A dog with one American pit bull terrier parent is partly an American pit bull terrier. However, would it fit that definition for the purposes of prohibition orders?"—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. 1188.] That is why we have so little faith in the Home Secretary who is panicking legislation through the House tonight.

Then things changed——

Mr. Devlin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Corbett: No.

Then things changed. Clark Kent, also known as the Prime Minister, decided that there was enough public concern for him to be decisive and to take action. On 21 May, he signalled from the Dispatch Box that stern action would be taken, at last, to control dogs. On 22 May, the Home Secretary announced from the Dispatch Box, "death to all pit bull terriers", and he was backed by the Prime Minister. As the days passed, the pit bull terrier that the Home Secretary mimicked on 22 May became the Pluto of today. He now says that the pit bull terriers need not die, but that the Government will try to price them into an early grave by making the charges for exemption certificates, neutering and registration as high as possible, with a minimum of £150 an animal. I know that the Home Secretary does not like to be reminded of the fact that he stood at the Dispatch Box on 22 May growling about putting down 10,000 pit bull terriers. Within days, he had changed his mind and backed away.

I hope that the Minister of State will, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) asked earlier, at least share with the House the process by which it was decided not to include rottweilers in the special categories. It is estimated that there are 10,000 pit bull terriers in the country compared with 100,000 rottweilers, 100,000 doberman pinschers, 100,000 Staffordshire bull terriers and about 250,000 German shepherd dogs. Will the Minister share with the House the details of the decision-making that enables the Home Secretary and his advisers to make a distinction between a dog that is born for fighting and a dog that is bred for aggressiveness? The Home Secretary has not persuaded the House about that distinction. There is virtually no distinction between bred for fighting and bred for aggressiveness.

I want to echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and others, with which the Home Secretary had some sympathy when he was kind enough to allow an intervention from me. My hon. Friend referred to dangerous dogs in tower blocks, in maisonettes and in back gardens—in other words, not in what one would normally understand to be public places.

The Post Office has told me of a 56-year-old woman whose right ear was torn off when three Alsatians attacked her in the driveway of a private house. She suffered other bites to the head, arms and legs, and underwent emergency surgery. Under the Bill, such an incident would not be caught under the definition of public places.

In my constituency, there are several families whose lives, children and cats are terrorised by a rottweiler living down the road which constantly leaps over—[*Laughter.*] That is no laughing matter. It leaps over the garden fence and as recently as last weekend, a cat had to be attended by a veterinarian and there was an £80 bill—[*Laughter.*] Is that a laughing matter? I hope that *Hansard* will record those who are laughing.

Can the Minister assure the House that when the police seek a warrant under the powers in clause 3, they will be able to call on the services of RSPCA inspectors and of trained and equipped dog wardens or veterinarians? It cannot be expectable to accept an ordinary beat police officer to attend to a dangerous dog in answer to a summons. Even police officers who have been trained in dog handling are not experienced in handling dangerous dogs that are out of control.

When the Minister of State replies, I hope that she will confirm that the Government will consider seriously the proposition in new clause 3 that people who are injured by dangerous dogs whose owners cannot be traced or identified should be able to make a claim for damages to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. The Minister of State will be aware that that issue has gone to judicial review because the board has claimed that it does not have such powers at the moment.

Will the Minister of State also confirm that no genetic test is available at the moment to determine absolutely the make-up of a dog? I am advised that it will take up to eight years to produce such a test. How will those people responsible for making decisions about the exemptions reach their conclusions?

It is regrettable that this debate has not been about encouraging responsible dog ownership. The vast majority of people who own dogs are responsible and accept the obligations of such ownership to ensure the enforceable control that a modern society requires. The Bill goes some way towards that and that is why we shall support it. However, it will take a Labour Government to do the job properly.

9.50 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Apart from the last rather deplorable contribution of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), we have had a helpful and positive debate this evening. In the time available, I will do my best to respond to the many points that have been made.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) for his contribution. I differ from his views in one respect. We believe that the Bill relates to pit bull terriers and those dangerous dogs that are bred for fighting and that cannot at any stage be considered to be safe irrespective of whether they have been friendly in the past.

We are grateful for the support of my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield had reservations about the Bill as he wanted a cull of dogs. Had we had such a cull of dogs, I suspect that the press would have created much fuss and there would have been many clarion calls and all sorts of things written about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Battersea dogs home is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), and we welcome his support for the Bill. I will respond to his point about the common parts of flats and stairways, and we shall be including either tattooing or tagging.

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) made helpful points about the costs of a registration scheme. We were also grateful for the helpful and supportive comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and for the remarks of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I confirm that we are engaged in consultations with the Association of British Insurers about the form of insurance that we will introduce.

I know that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) is concerned about the Lynch family. As a good constituency Member, he has supported that family for some years since the sad death of Kelly Lynch. I understand his points and extend my sympathy to Kelly's parents. I hope that the Bill and the hon. Gentleman's support of it will go some way towards rewarding his constant work for those parents.

In response to the hon. Member for Londonderry, (Mr. Ross), I can state that we have considered the Northern Ireland registration scheme. However, we note with interest that that scheme still commands only 50 per cent. support from the people of Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) need not worry about Staffordshire bull terriers. I shall refer to clause 4 in a moment. The hon. Gentleman is wrong about the date of the introduction of the Bill allowing puppies to be bred. As from 31 July, when the legislation will be on the statute book, it will be an offence for dogs to have puppies, and such puppies will be caught by all clauses of the Bill. *[Interruption.]* I refer not to all dogs but to banned or dangerous dogs.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) wanted me to answer a number of points. If the right hon. Gentleman is interested in the response——

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister of State give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: I cannot give way, because I have other questions to answer.

On the support of veterinary associations, of course it is not for me to commit parliamentary support of organisations such as the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Association and the RSPCA. However, I can tell the House that those bodies have welcomed the principle of the Bill to rid the country of pit bull terriers and fighting dogs and also the controls that my right hon. Friend is proposing to apply to exempted dogs—that is, neutering, permanent marking and compulsory insurance. All those matters have been supported.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned the security of conditions in which pit bull terriers are kept. It is unnecessary to define or set out the security of conditions in which clause 1 dogs should be kept. The Bill does that. If a clause 1 dog were to escape, the owner would be subject to criminal proceedings. Anyone who risks his clause 1 dog escaping is courting the same severe penalties, including imprisonment. It is his responsibility to ensure that the dog is secure.

On the point about compulsory insurance, I have been asked whether it should be a requirement for all dogs to be covered by third party insurance. All dog owners are liable under the Animals Act 1971 for any damage that their pets may cause. They are therefore recommended to protect themselves and their neighbours with third party insurance. Because of the particular risks that fighting dogs represent, we are requiring the owners of such dogs that have been exempted to prove that they are covered in that exemption.

A register will simply record that a dog exists. A certificate of exemption records that certain action has been taken over a pit bull terrier—that is, that the dog has been neutered, marked permanently and is covered by insurance. Those are very good safeguards.

I was grateful to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) because it was extremely supportive, particularly his affirmation that the Police Federation is completely behind my right hon. Friend's Bill. My hon. Friend asked about clause 4 dogs. There is no power in the Bill to include German shepherds in clause 1, as they are not fighting dogs. If there is a need to take action against other breeds of dogs, it will be under clause 2 where there are, quite properly, less restrictive controls. On my hon. Friend's point about strays, the term "stray" is used in section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It is a common term which apparently requires no definition.

On his point about aggravated offences, and the police, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge asked whether there will be a problem in establishing whether an offence was aggravated. That should not be a problem, as clause 3(1) clearly defines that an aggravated offence is committed when a dog that is out of control causes injury. That should be a simple matter of evidence.

I appreciate the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge about the costs of having dogs destroyed. That is why clauses 4(4)(b) and 4(5) contain provisions to recover costs. That is by a well-tried drafting formula and we hope that it will be thoroughly effective.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) for his helpful and supportive points. He asked whether minors should be allowed to be in charge of clause 1 dogs. We are considering the conditions that should apply to certificates of exemption and we shall bear my hon. Friend's points in mind. We have already anticipated that point in clause 3(2), which places an onus on a dog owner to ensure that it is in the charge of a responsible person. I appreciate that my hon. Friend has other points on which the Government are not likely to be quite so helpful, but that debate will occur later.

The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) referred to puppy farms. Home Office Ministers have always said that they support measures to end puppy farm abuses. I expect an announcement to be made shortly about the introduction of such a measure. I acknowledge, too, the other points made by the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) referred to the definition of a public place. Clause 8(2) covers all places to which the public have unrestricted access. They include many common areas in and around tower blocks, as my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) mentioned. Therefore, the criminal offence in clause 3 does not apply to anything that happens in back gardens, which are private places.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to the Order this day.*

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Further proceedings postponed, pursuant to the Order this day.

Dangerous Dogs Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Dangerous Dogs Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of that Act.—*Mr. Boswell.]*

10 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): When I opposed the timetable motion, I made it clear that I supported the overall objectives of the Bill but that I very much deplored the way in which it was being rushed through the House. *[Interruption.]* It appears that we are in the midst of a convention of small order waiters. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that we are now under the guillotine. However, he has a perfect right to make a speech on the money resolution.

Mr. Banks: The more I listened to the Second Reading debate the more I realised that the House is making a grave error in rushing the Bill through. There are so many unanswered questions. I am certain that other unanswered questions will arise out of the money resolution.

The Secretary of State referred to the compensation for which the money resolution provides the wherewithal. It provides compensation for those owners of pit bull terriers and any other designated owners who have their dogs put down. I understand that it is £50—£25 for the cost of having the dog put down and £25 to compensate owners for the loss of the dog. Many dog owners would consider that £25 compensation was tantamount to an insult, given that they might very much love their dog but might not be able to afford—if they decided not to have their dog put down—all the other costs arising out of neutering, registration and the other matters to which the Secretary of State referred. Those matters and proposals are supported by all responsible dog owners, as well as by the Opposition and the animal welfare organisations.

The Secretary of State is prepared to provide compensation for those owners who decide to have their dogs put down and to give a small sum of money to those who thereby lose their dogs, but it is very cruel that he is not prepared to give anything to those who might wish to go along with the legislation, because they are responsible owners, but who are unable to afford all the veterinary and registration costs that are tied up with this legislation.

The Secretary of State is not encouraging responsible dog ownership. Those who are prepared to have their dogs put down and to take £25 do not, I believe, fall into the category of responsible dog owners. Responsible pit bull terrier owners will be those who are in the terrible dilemma of wanting to go along with the legislation but who cannot afford the various costs.

The Secretary of State must accept that this is retrospective legislation. When these people bought their pit bull terriers, none of the illegalities that will arise from 31 July onwards was on the statute book. Those people will be penalised. This is retrospective legislation. In those circumstances, the Secretary of State should reconsider this matter. We cannot do it now, but if we had had a proper Committee stage, these matters could have been thoroughly considered. Proper amendments could have been tabled in Committee. These issues could have been

[Mr. Banks]

raised, and perhaps we would have found out the costs involved. I do not know what the costs are. The Home Secretary does not know. I do not believe that anyone can accurately say how many pit bull terriers there are. However many there are, it will be difficult to find them because people will keep them behind doors, undetected, as long as possible. With a Committee stage, we could have found out about all those matters.

On the face of it, it seems that a large part of the costs will fall on responsible dog owners. They want to go along with the Bill's terms but cannot afford to do so. They will be given a cruel choice. I hope that, in responding to the debate on the money resolution, the Home Secretary will say that he will at least consider introducing—perhaps in another place—a scheme that allows an element of compensation to be paid to those responsible dog owners who want to go along with the legislation but, unfortunately, cannot afford to do so. Those owners will be left with the dilemma of either disobeying the law or having their animal put down.

10.5 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The explanatory and financial memorandum states:

"expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the Bill"

shall

"be paid out of money provided by Parliament."

I wish to speak on the money resolution because there will probably be changes to the Bill that bring costs on the taxpayer. I did not have an opportunity to speak on Second Reading, but I make no complaint about that because my points deal directly with the prospect of costs.

Twenty-odd years ago, my youngest daughter, who is a pretty and attractive girl, was on a camp site near the Wirral in Cheshire. She was attacked by a large, savage dog and sustained serious injuries. Thankfully, because of the skilled medical treatment which she received, today she is an attractive young lady. I assure the House that, at that time, my wife and I and other members of my family were very worried. To this day, I still remember with horror my feelings when taking her to hospital, because of her appalling condition.

I believed then, and I believe now, that registration and all the other provisions that may or may not emerge from the Bill would not have had any impact on those events. The dog was tethered on a long lead. My youngest daughter, like other members of the family, was fond of animals. Not realising the hazard and the horror, the child did what many children do and went towards the dog, which attacked her.

Some of the speeches made earlier, particularly on the Bill's financial implications, were pertinent to those circumstances. We want to ensure that we deal with the problem of dogs that have savaged and attacked people. The Bill in its present form deals substantially with that matter. It lays down a framework to deal with incidents of the kind that I described, which brought terrible horror to my family and me. I commend the Government for introducing the Bill.

On the money resolution, no one has mentioned in detail the fact that children may recover from physical injuries, but what of the mental injuries that may remain? At the time of that incident, my wife and I wanted to do something. It cost money—that is the point that I wanted to make. Today, we have a large dog at home, which is the property of my youngest daughter. It has all the equipment that could do damage to people. However, we were determined, that our children should not be afraid of dogs because of our experience and that has involved certain costs.

We should be careful to ensure that the Government and the public purse do not end up accepting responsibility that really belongs to the owners of the dogs concerned. That is why an insurance scheme is probably the most important element of the Bill. I am sorry that I have detained the House, which probably wants to move on to other things, but we have listened——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the House—like myself—is concerned that this sounds more like a Second Reading speech than one on a money resolution.

Mr. Walker: But I am talking about money, Mr. Speaker, and about why I felt that it was important——

Mr. Speaker: The money resolution deals with compensation.

Mr. Walker: As I read it, Mr. Speaker, the money resolution refers to

"the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of that Act."

I am quoting the Bill exactly, Mr. Speaker, because I am a simple chap and think that that wording could be open-ended. I am trying to warn the House: we do not want the public purse to have to pick up costs that properly and rightly are the responsiblity of the owners of the dogs that inflict the damage. It is vital that the House considers that point before moving on to the next stage.

10.11 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall detain the House for only a moment but, as the House knows, I have spoken on many money resolutions and feel that this one is couched in rather broad terms. I should like the Minister to confirm that the money resolution would enable the Secretary of State to expend money on the introduction of a dog registration scheme if that is the way in which the Bill is subsequently amended, as I hope it will be.

It is estimated that the passage of the Bill would result in increased expenditure of £250,000—I think that that is rather a low estimate—and that the rest of the Bill will be self-financing because of the licensing scheme. However, the money resolution is broad enough to suggest that, if one or both of the new clauses is passed and a dog registration scheme established, a further money resolution will not be necessary. I draw the House's attention to the difficulties of not providing adequate time for considering the legislation. Previously, for example, even Home Office Ministers have found in Committee that the money resolutions that were passed earlier were insufficient.

Will the Minister also confirm that the money resolution will enable the Secretary of State to spend money on establishing an insurance scheme, which I believe is a vital component of the legislation? My information is that the insurance companies will be extremely reluctant to embark on any insurance scheme for pit bull terriers, which may be exempted from being put

down. The Government may have to investigate using public funds to promote such a scheme. Can the money resolution, as presently drafted, provide for that?

I very much hope that the House is not delayed for too long on the money resolution and that we can ensure that the dog registration scheme, which is a fundamental component of any system to ensure proper dog ownership and control, is passed and that the Secretary of State will have the necessary powers, through the money resolution and the Bill when it is enacted, to implement it.

10.14 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Before the House passes the money resolution, it should be told how the figure of £0·25 million was arrived at. We are shortly to consider a new clause that would extend a dog registration scheme to all types of dog and the Government will undoubtedly argue that one of the main reasons why we cannot have such a scheme is that it would cost a certain amount of money. The Bill provides for a registration scheme for two breeds, and undoubtedly that will cost some money. I should like to know how much it is likely to cost and whether it is proposed that the cost will be recovered from registration fees.

We are told in the explanatory and financial memorandum that it is expected that the financial effects of the Bill will be recovered

"from fees charged to those whose dogs are excepted."

We should be told how much the overall scheme is supposed to cost and how much is intended to be recovered by way of fees charged to those whose dogs are excepted, so that when we consider a general registration scheme we can re-examine the figures.

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The House has endorsed the principle of the Bill, and it is now being asked to will the means. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked me two specific questions, and the answer to both of them is yes. I think that that will save him from further concern.

I can tell my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) that the costs of the compensation and destruction provisions are likely to be within about £250,000. He will appreciate the difficulties of estimating total expenditure in an area where other costs may be involved later. I think that I have given the House the figure that he was hoping that I would put before it.

I have noted the experience of the daughter of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I am glad to hear that she has entirely recovered from it and is an attractive young woman, and that she owns a dog. My hon. Friend's contribution restores our confidence that people can have unhappy experiences yet still enjoy the benefits of being a dog owner. I entirely agree with him that the insurance scheme that is referred to in the Bill will answer many of the problems that he had to face when his daughter suffered such an unfortunate accident.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke with great passion about the problems that are faced by those who do not wish to have their dogs destroyed and wish to retain them. We believe that some of the animal associations are willing to come to the assistance of those who may have to incur expenditure on neutering, for example. But the intentions that lie behind the Bill are clear and the dogs that are defined in clause 1 —pit bull terriers, the tosa dog of Japan and the bandog —are those that we do not wish to have remaining in our society. They are types of dog—not breeds—that we wish to see eliminated from it.

We did not wish to go down the road of destruction of these dogs because there are a number of people who come within the category to which the hon. Gentleman referred. They are the sort of people who will try their best to comply with the exemptions that we have provided. I say of necessity, however, that these exemptions must be tough. If we introduced soft exemptions, certain owners of dogs that we want to try to eliminate from our society would find ways of keeping their dogs in our society. For the many reasons that have been given on Second Reading——

Mr. Tony Banks: I did not argue that exemptions should be soft or that owners should be allowed to get round them. I was arguing the contrary point of view. I was saying that many people who want to comply with the terms of the Bill, or the Act as it will be, will not be able to afford to pay. Surely the Government must accept that, when those people got hold of their dogs, the Bill was not even being contemplated. To ask responsible dog owners to meet the cost in full is a good example of retrospective legislation. That seems wrong, and the Government should be prepared to offer compensation to those owners as well.

Mrs. Rumbold: Very few people would have acquired American pit bull terriers without understanding that they are potentially exceedingly dangerous animals. We are operating within the limitations of the exemption scheme, but some animal welfare organisations my be willing to offer assistance to those who genuinely wish to retain their dogs and to comply with every one of the measures necessary to obtain a certification of exemption.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to insist that the Bill is most important for the elimination of those species from our society. They are too dangerous, and genuinely responsible people would not wish to fly in the face of the dangers that such dogs might provide if they were retained. If owners feel so strongly, I am sure that someone will come to their assistance. I do not believe that that is part of the Government's task and any number of amendments in Committee will not necessarily change the Government's mind.

The Bill is clear, and I hope that it will satisfy the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Dangerous Dogs Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of that Act.

Dangerous Dogs Bill

Considered in Committee pursuant to Order [6 June].

New Clause 1

CONTROL OF DOGS NOT OTHERWISE REGULATED

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall by regulations make provision for the registration, identification and control of dogs not otherwise regulated under this Act.

(2) Regulations under this section shall include, provision for the regulations to be administered by local authorities, and for the charging by them of registration fees of such amounts, and subject to such exemptions, as they may determine or the Secretary of State may prescribe.

(3) Any person who without reasonable excuse—

(a) fails to comply without any requirement imposed on him by regulations under this section to register a dog or,

(b) fails to comply with any requirement so imposed as respects identification of a dog,

shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

(4) in performing their duties under this section, local authorities may enter into such agreements with any person as may in their opinion facilitate the registration and identification of dogs.

(5) No regulations under this section shall be made unless a draft thereof has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament and the Secretary of State shall lay the first draft regulations before the end of the period of two years beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

(6) In this section "local authority", means in England and Wales a District Council, a London Borough Council or the Common Council of the City of London, and in Scotland means an islands or district council.'.—*[Dame Janet Fookes.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.22 pm

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take also new clause 5—*Dog registration*—

'(1) The Secretary of State shall by order make provision for a scheme for the registration, identification and control of dogs.

(2) In making an order the Secretary of State shall provide, inter alia, for the scheme to be administered by local authorities, and for the fixing of registration fees, including such variations as may be prescribed, to be paid by the owners, or keepers of dogs to the relevant authorities.

(3) An owner or keeper of a dog who fails to register it or to ensure that it can be identified in accordance with regulations made under a scheme in accordance with this section shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

(4) In performing their duties under this section, local authorities may enter such agreements with any person as may in their opinion facilitate the registration and identification of dogs.

(5) The Secretary of State shall, not later than 12 months from the passing of this Act, lay an order under this section before Parliament for approval in accordance with subsection (6) below.

(6) Any order made under this section shall be exercisable by statutory instrument and no order shall be made unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

(7) In this section, "local authority" means in England and Wales a District Council, a London Borough Council or the Common Council, and in Scotland means a District or Islands Council.'.

Dame Janet Fookes: Before I deal with the provisions of the new clause, I wish to set it into context.

I warmly support the Bill's provisions as they stand. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on seeking the advice of experts on this matter and acting on it so that the Bill has reached its present form. Let us be under no illusions. In effect, if not in name, there is a registration scheme for dangerous dogs. It fulfils the basic criterion that dogs and their owners should be identified, and the two are linked. A registration fee, or whatever it is called, will be paid and conditions will be attached. Those are the purposes of a registration scheme and they are fulfilled in the Bill.

I shall seek to persuade the House that it should go one step further and have registration for all dogs not otherwise covered by the Bill. I have sought something of that kind for many years in the company of a number of organisations outside the House. The issue goes back to the mid-1970s. I recall that in 1976 a joint working paper was produced by the Home Office and the Department of the Environment which sought to build on the old dog licensing scheme. Many of the arguments that were valid then are equally valid today.

I led deputations to the Home Secretaries of that period, but with a singular lack of success. That is sad bearing in mind the fact that a Labour Government were in control. I have had an equal lack of success with the present Government.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does my hon. Friend appreciate that the original dog licence was introduced not to register difficult or dangerous dogs or those that existed at all, but because there was a great trade in stolen dogs which were brought to London to be sold? The licence scheme was introduced to identify stolen dogs from unstolen dogs and it had nothing to do whatever with the registration of dogs—dangerous or undangerous.

Dame Janet Fookes: But it is perfectly possible to adapt to changing times. I do not, of course, recall the introduction of that particular item, but perhaps my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) does. It was a long time ago—1876, was it? I believe that we could build on that old system, but it is water under the bridge. I was merely seeking to observe that my interest in this is of very long standing and that my views have been refined over the years to try to produce what I think is a workable scheme.

One might imagine that those who might have to deal with the dog registration scheme would be opposed to it, but quite the contrary. The interesting thing about the dog registration scheme is that all those at the sharp end, who must deal with the problem of dogs in town and country, want such a registration scheme introduced.

I should like to have the indulgence of the House to make two short quotations from information that I have recently received on this issue. I received a letter from the Association of District Councils at the weekend which said:

"The Association fully supports the principle of the Bill but remains convinced that a national dog registration scheme, covering all dogs, with a direct link between a dog and its owner, is the only real way forward in attempting to secure responsible dog ownership. Without such registration, district councils will, in many respects, remain powerless to deal with the many problems that dogs can cause."

I should add that the association was sufficiently interested to produce a complete scheme that it had

worked out for the Department of the Environment some months ago. It wanted the DOE to look at it, but heaven alone knows what happened to it within that hideous building described as the DOE. It does not seem to have seen daylight again. That scheme is an indication of the interest and concern felt by district councils.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The statement that my hon. Friend read out from the Association of District Councils says, in effect, that it cannot carry out its work without a dog registration scheme. In what way will it be unable to carry out its work? It has made an assertion, but provided no evidence.

Dame Janet Fookes: In due course I hope to set this in context so that my hon. Friend will understand—at least I will try to make him understand.

I also recently received a letter from the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management which said:

"This Institute, which represents, inter alia, most of the senior managers of public parks and open spaces in this country, wishes to express its strong support for the introduction of dog licencing by local authorities as a means of controlling the ever-growing dog population by encouraging responsible ownership."

It believes that the arguments are overwhelming. It properly pointed out that many other countries have a dog registration scheme, including parts of North America and that we are out of step and out of line.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dame Janet Fookes: With reluctance and for the last time to my hon. and learned Friend.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend make it clear to the House that her quotations relate to English or Welsh authorities, and that they describe the conditions in those countries and have nothing whatever to do with Scotland?

Dame Janet Fookes: I doubt whether that makes the case any less valid for England. I shall leave my hon. and learned Friend to speak for Scotland.

The Bill has concerned itself with particularly dangerous dogs, but it is important to understand that many other breeds and types of dog cause considerable problems. They are in danger of being overlooked if we concern ourselves with very dangerous dogs. Many dogs bite, as postmen will rather bitterly testify—and they are among the groups that want a registration scheme.

10.30 pm

The National Farmers Union wants a registration scheme because sheep worrying is of great concern to farmers in country areas. We also know that many traffic accidents are caused by dogs that are out of control. However, it is impossible to have proper control unless there are fewer irresponsible owners. It is too easy for them to have a dog, to leave it uncontrolled, and to abandon it. The dogs' homes are full of such animals, which lead miserable lives. If they cannot be re-homed by the animal charities, they are destroyed—probably in the prime of life.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Can my hon. Friend explain how registration would assist with the problem of sheep worrying? My understanding is that farmers who find dogs on their land worrying sheep have the right to shoot them, so it is not a question of identifying the owners. Is my hon. Friend suggesting that farmers would desist from that practice, capture the dogs and return them to their owners? I suspect that they will continue to shoot them.

Dame Janet Fookes: Farmers will no doubt continue to do that, but I am trying to make the case for prevention, which is better than the cure of shooting the dogs. It is a bit late by then; the damage has already been done.

The point that I am trying to make—it is difficult to get it through to some of my colleagues—is that, if we can identify the owners and make them responsible, it is far less likely that they will allow the animals to stray and get out of control. Over time, that will discourage people from having dogs unless they are prepared to care for them.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Lady agree that if there were a dog registration scheme, the owners of the dogs involved in two incidents in my constituency during the past few days could be traced? In the first incident, a child playing on a school playing field was attacked and bitten by an alsatian—owner untraceable. In the second, a school teacher supervising children at play on a school playing field was bitten by a rottweiler—owner untraceable. If all dogs were registered, the owners of both those dogs could have been traced and appropriate action taken. I hope that the hon. Lady succeeds tonight with her worthwhile clause.

Dame Janet Fookes: I shall deal with the clause as I see it, and that may answer some of the questions that I hear being asked by hon. Friends sitting behind me. I purposely have not laid down precise details for a scheme—not because of a lack of information, but, in a sense, because there is too much information. The clause simply asks the Secretary of State to produce, within two years, a detailed scheme to be introduced by regulations. That would give ample opportunity to discuss matters with all those who have a keen interest in the matter—the Association of District Councils, the police, the animal charities and anyone else who is concerned.

I envisage a scheme that would require the dog and the owner to be linked by a central computer, into which the district councils would have an input. The cost has been worked out at about £3 per dog per year, which is a very small amount. I have had discussions with computer experts, who tell me that it is an extremely easy exercise. Indeed, there are already some voluntary registration schemes in effect. The Wood Green animal shelter has one such scheme, and it works very well. About a year ago, the Battersea dogs home decided that it would re-home no animal without its being permanently identified—in this case, by the identichip. It is well satisfied with the way that its scheme is working. I commend it to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government, so that they can see something that is actually in use, rather than just talking about a theory.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): My first task when I came to the House was to serve on the Standing Committee considering the Bill to introduce the community charge. The Government promised then that administration of the system would be cheap, because of all the modern computer buffs, and also that charges would be kept down to £255 in my area. My constituents

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

were somewhat disappointed to receive a community charge demand for £430 in the first year. Does my hon. Friend feel entirely confident about a "poll tax" for dogs?

Dame Janet Fookes: Yes, I do. This is a very different matter from the community charge. I do not want to be drawn down that path, but there is every reason to suppose that my proposal could be implemented easily and simply.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will my hon. Friend advocate benefit for pensioners and others on low incomes —"dog registration benefit"?

Dame Janet Fookes: I have already said that I did not want to include all the details in the new clause, because I thought it important for such problems to be ironed out. It is entirely possible for us to ensure, if we wish, that all dogs are registered, but we need not necessarily impose the same fee for all dogs. It would be possible—if the House so decided after due consideration—to allow a differential licence for, say, guide dogs for the blinds, working dogs generally or dogs of retired people living alone.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): As the hon. Lady knows, I have been rather sceptical about the whole business of registration; however, I welcome her more flexible approach.

Do I take it that the hon. Lady has ruled out the option of relying on tattoos, which can be easily obliterated? Can she also relieve one of my anxieties about identification? I understand that the indentity chip would be inserted in the scruff of the dog's neck, and there is some evidence that it could move about and be difficult to locate.

I am told that there is a high failure rate. Can the hon. Lady comment on that? Finally—so that I need not interrupt again—may I ask whether she favours the fixing of the licence by the Secretary of State? Does she feel that the Secretary of State should be able to fix a ceiling, so that certain local authorities could make it virtually impossible for poorer people to keep dogs?

Dame Janet Fookes: I have no evidence that the identity chip has the disadvantages attributed to it by the hon. Gentleman. According to the Battersea dogs home, it is working extremely well, having been in operation for about a year.

As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, tattooing has certain disadvantages; on the other hand, it is a darn sight better than what we have now, which is nil. We could decide whether people should be allowed a choice of permanent identification or whether we should rely solely on a colour-coded tag, for example. The Home Secretary should give such matters detailed consideration—unless, of course, the Department of the Environment or some other Department takes charge. That is why I have not made firm proposals tonight. Good identification is, however, essential and I believe that we should take advantage of every modern facility available to us.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon West): I entirely accept my hon. Friend's argument that computerisation would allow the licensing authority to identify, for example, different breeds. My concern is that almost everyone could claim that they needed their dog for some reason or another. There would remain only a narrow band of people who enjoy an income and who do not fall into any definable social, health, personal or other category offering them exemption, who would have to pay the full fee.

Dame Janet Fookes: Again, it will be entirely open to the House eventually to decide whether it wants many exemptions or only a few. That is the advantage of the scheme that I propose—every permutation of which could be considered in detail. I simply make the point that it is technically and practically feasible to provide for such exemptions if required. If the House preferred to operate a flat rate covering old-age pensioners, guide dogs for the blind, and so on, so be it. However, it would be perfectly possible to introduce variations without undue bureaucracy.

One of the strangest cries of protest that I have heard is that the scheme would give rise to bureaucracy. As we are living in the age of the computer and not of the quill pen, I fail to understand that argument.

Reference was made to the Swansea scheme. As I recall, that was instituted in the very early days of computerisation, and it was left in the hands of people who were not computer experts. They made some stupid mistakes, which I hope will never be repeated. Most of our affairs are now conducted with the aid of computers, and although mistakes may sometimes be made, by and large we have greatly profited from the service that computers can give —but they are, of course, only as good as the people who have an input into them.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I would not want my hon. Friend to deceive the House in what she said a few moments ago, when she described identification methods. She said that what we have at the moment is nil. Earlier this afternoon, I had the opportunity to question my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I understand that, as a result of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, enforcement procedures are available—particularly in respect of the tagging and identification of dogs. Many of us believe that that would be a simpler and more straightforward way of encouraging responsible ownership and identification than the use of an immensely expensive registration scheme such as my hon. Friend advocates.

Dame Janet Fookes: Let me amend my comment. What we have at the moment is effectively nil. If all the measures on the statute book were enforced, perhaps we would not be in the pickle that we are tonight. Incidentally, I see the enforcement of the collar and tag as the first line of defence. If a dog was seen without a collar and tag, that would immediately alert the authorities that something was wrong, and they could then establish whether the animal was properly identified.

Dog wardens have an essential role to play in educating the public and in enforcing whatever laws relating to dogs there may be. Some local authorities already employ dog wardens, while others do not. All should do so, to complement the scheme that I propose. Some of the cost could be taken from the registration fee, if required. I believe that the Association of District Councils would want that done. Again, that is a matter for debate.

I have sought to outline the reasons why I believe that a dog registration scheme covering all dogs not already included in the Bill is both important and practical, and to suggest the various ways in which such a scheme might be

implemented. The new clause would give the Secretary of State time to work out detailed regulations in consultation with all those who have an interest in the matter.

I have taken rather longer than I had wished because of the large number of interventions. Before I conclude, let me repeat that the RSPCA inspectors, the dog wardens, the local authorities and the police—all the people who have to deal with the problem in practice—want registration. The question that I therefore ask the House is this: are the Government right when they say that registration is unnecessary, or are the people who do the job right?

I commend the new clause to the House.

10.45 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) said about the new clause and pleased that I was able to put my name to the proposal.

I have listened with interest to the case that has been made about the poverty of pensioners and others who, it is suggested, may not be able to afford the registration fee. I hope that, when we next debate social security matters, Conservative Members will listen to what is said about the problems of elderly people who have been refused benefit and cannot even get a loan from their local social security offices because those offices' budgets have dried up.

Many of the elderly people who hon. Members suggest will suffer hardship under a dog registration scheme would in fact be among the first to seek to register their dogs, because the existence of strays and the actions of irresponsible dog owners can lead to disease, which may be passed to dogs that are valued pets.

I emphasise what the hon. Member for Drake said. In many streets in my constituency and throughout the country, the first thing that children do in the morning is to open the door and let the dog out into the street. Such dogs cannot be regarded as strays in the usual sense, because they go back to the family home to be fed at night. None the less, during the day they are out in the street, where they may cause a nuisance to passers-by and where they pick up whatever parasites may be around. When the elderly responsible dog owners to whom Conservative Members have referred take their dogs out, the pets may pick up a disease from dogs that are left in the street—many of them for 16 hours a day. Registration would allow people such as dog wardens to track down dogs and persuade their owners to become more responsible.

As I said on Second Reading, many people who live in communities where dogs are allowed to stray or to sit out in the street are deeply ashamed of that fact. Even if they have lovely homes and, in some cases, lovely gardens, they are ashamed to take their friends and relatives into the neighbourhood because of the dogs, and many of them want to apply for a transfer to another area and another community.

It should be emphasised that not all owners have only one dog. There can be as many as three dogs living with a household in a tenement flat. That is irresponsible. It is not fair to the dogs, because they are not being properly exercised.

To illustrate what dog registration could do, I shall tell the Committee about a case in a terrace-type housing estate in the Barmulloch area of my constituency. A tenant complained to me that the next-door neighbour had five dogs in the house during the weekend. It turned out that he was a greyhound owner and before a race he wanted the dogs under his control and not in a kennel in case someone tried to tamper with them. That was all very well, but those dogs were used to being in a kennel where they could bark 24 hours a day. At the weekend, they were in an environment where people wanted a wee bit of peace and quiet—some people were working shifts.

Mr. Butterfill: How would registration help to stop dogs barking?

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman should have the decency to let people speak. He had his chance during an intervention and I dare say that he will get a chance to speak. The rest of us were quiet during his intervention.

Dog registration would help in the situation that I have described because usually when the council questions such a tenant he denies that he is the owner of four or five dogs. Registration would mean that there could be some confirmation that the next-door neighbour was telling the truth when she complained that there were four or five dogs in the household.

Things got so bad in the case that I described that a perfectly good tenant gave up. She could not sleep at night because there were so many dogs in the house next door. What did she do? She applied to the local authority for a transfer, and because she had put up with the carry-on for 18 months, she got it. Her problem has been solved, but when a tenant moves out a potential tenant, looking at the house, will ask why the last tenant left. As a result, areas become hard to let. A factor that is often consistent in hard-to-let areas is that dogs are allowed to get out of control. Owners should have to face up to registration.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I shall be brief. I welcome the Bill, but I hope that the new clause will not be added to it. I listened to the opening speeches on Second Reading and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made two interesting admissions in his speech. First, when he was challenged by one of my hon. Friends about advice given to the then Labour Government in 1977 by the British Veterinary Association that pit bull terriers should not be imported into this country, he frankly admitted that he had not found that advice persuasive and that he had rejected it. If he had taken a different course I doubt whether any of us would be detained here this evening to debate this matter, and I think that he probably agrees with me.

When he was challenged again I also heard the right hon. Gentleman say that in 1983 he voted against dog registration and he admitted that he had been in error in so doing. I am sure that at the time he did not think that he was in error.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): If the right hon. Gentleman is so fascinated by my record, it is hardly worth making the point, but he obtained an admission from me when no apology was necessary, which is very much out of character as far as I am concerned. I have now discovered the measure to which he referred—a long enabling Bill referring to about 20 local authority powers, one of which was registration. Much as I believe in registration, if such an enabling Bill were put before the House again today, I would vote against it. The point that the right hon. Gentleman made is false.

Mr. Onslow: I am interested to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that, because I would have respected him very much if he had also conceded that in 1983 he did not think that registration was necessary because there was not perceived to be a problem with dangerous dogs. I do not know how many pit bull terriers had been imported into the country in the intervening six years after he opened the gates in 1977, but I doubt whether it was many, and I doubt whether there was anything like the evidence that there is today to show that there is a particular threat that must be dealt with urgently, as this Bill seeks to do.

However many pit bull terriers there were in 1983, we are told that there may be 10,000 in Britain today. That is an astonishing figure, and it has not been contradicted. It is recognised now, but it was not in 1983, that they are an affront to society and that something must be done about them. We are talking almost exclusively about the problem of dangerous dogs, and one dangerous breed in particular. It would be better to focus on the Bill, which seeks precisely to tackle the problem, and not to be distracted by the diversion of dog registration. *[Interruption.]* I can give the hon. Gentleman a figure or two; I know that he is fond of them.

There are said to be 7 million dogs in this country. According to the Metropolitan police, in 1990 there were 468 serious attacks by dogs on people in the metropolis, 111 of which were carried out by one breed alone—the pit bull terrier. If my mathematics is remotely correct, that accounts for about 0·15 per cent. of the dog population of the United Kingdom and about a quarter of the serious attacks on people. That is why we should focus on dangerous dogs rather than being distracted by the resurrection of the dog registration scheme.

We are talking about dangerous dogs and the action that we should take to deal with them. Pit bull terriers are 10 times as dangerous as any other breed. It is no surprise that they should be singled out, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary rightly chose to do so.

If any criticism can be made of the Government, it is that the Bill was not introduced sooner, not that it has been rushed through in response to media pressure and is a knee-jerk reaction. The problem is that the groundwork has been confused by the argument for registration, for reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) mentioned. She rightly claimed much credit for her long advocacy of something to replace the oudated dog licence scheme. We all know that the fee that is charged for a dog licence is ridiculous and that the scheme ceases to have validity.

Complaints have been made about dog nuisance, about the problem of strays and about the cruelty with which some owners treated animals and abandoned them. All that is about animal welfare, not dangerous dogs, but we must focus on the danger. Although there may be a need for better legislation on dog welfare, I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Drake made a powerful case that registration would encourage owners to behave more responsibly in their treatment of dangerous dogs. No responsible owner should have a dangerous dog—it is as simple and straightforward as that.

There has been a dialectical need to confuse the argument for too many years, but at last the fallacy has been identified. Dangerous dogs need special laws, which the Bill provides, but dog registration is unnecessary for other dog owners. I ask, rhetorically perhaps, what would a dog register do? We know that it would be expensive. A figure of £42 million was mentioned in response to an inquiry carried out by the RSPCA. My hon. Friend the Member for Drake may challenge that.

Dame Janet Fookes: I do. The figure for registration alone is about £20 million, which works out at about £3 per dog.

Mr. Onslow: I am aware of that component of the total, but I understood that there is a component for dog wardens, who presumably will not work for nothing.

Dame Janet Fookes: I did not intend to follow the example of other hon. Members by intervening, but the point I was making was that the amount could be variable, depending how much was loaded on the registration fee.

Mr. Onslow: My hon. Friend still has not answered my question about the cost of the dog wardens. I am sorry to have to say that I do not find her rebuttal of the £42 million figure entirely convincing. I think that we shall just have to agree to disagree.

The other arguments that have been advanced in favour of the dog registration scheme seem almost equally spurious. On Second Reading, some Opposition Members said that a dog that was dangerously out of control, which is mentioned in the Bill, would be dealt with by dog registration, and that would prevent dogs from running across the road and causing car accidents. I do not find that line of thought particularly easy to follow——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): No.

11 pm

Mr. Onslow: If the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) has ever owned a dog and it has never slipped out of a door without his knowing because someone opened the back door when he was not looking, I should be surprised.

Mr. Cook: I have owned many dogs and used to breed them. The claim with which I take issue is that anyone has suggested that a registration scheme could possibly stop a dog bolting through a door. No one has ever suggested that. The purpose of a registration scheme is that the animal is tagged to an owner who must be responsible for the animal's actions and treatment. Therefore, a registration scheme would serve the dual purpose of ensuring that the animal was treated right and that the owner ensured that the animal treated other people right.

Mr. Onslow: I am sorry to have to disagree with the hon. Gentleman, whose judgment in many matters I respect, but I do not think that he can ever have owned which did not slip out of the back door when nobody was looking—responsible owner or not.

We have heard of two incidents in playgrounds where dogs were said to have attacked first a child and then a teacher. I think that lawyers in the Chamber will be able to confirm that, if in either of those cases the dog responsible had been caught and held, it would have been perfectly possible to take action against it and its owner if it had been wearing a tag, as it should have been. It would not have made the dog or the owner behave more responsibly. It would perhaps have made action possible afterwards, but it would not have protected the child or the teacher from a serious attack.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Onslow: If my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me, I shall not give way as I know that many other hon. Members want to speak.

We should focus on what matters to people outside the House, to people with children who have seen the horrible pictures of attacks by dogs which are dangerous and which everyone knows to be dangerous. We should give the Bill a speedy passage and forget about dog registration, because it makes no contribution to the problem.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I support the new clause. The key issues that must be tackled are not the horrific attacks on humans—horrible as those are—but stray dogs on the highway, sheep worrying and neglect, which could all be dealt with by a dog registration scheme. It would certainly discourage the practice, which happens all too often in urban districts, of owners turning their dog out of the door first thing in the morning and leaving it to roam around the neighbourhood, assuming that it will return in the evening. The dog is often let out with no collar and no means of identification. The purpose of a registration scheme would be to convince people that if they want to be dog owners they must be responsible ones. Before they take on the responsibility, they should be made to think that looking after a dog is expensive and continues for a long period.

I regret that too many of my constituents become dog owners on a casual basis, believing that it will not cost them much and that, if they lose interest in the dog, someone else will look after it so they do not need to be committed to it. Through the registration scheme, we could convince people that becoming a dog owner involves long-standing expense and responsibility.

If we had an effective system of registration and a system under which dogs were effectively tagged or identified, it would be far easier for people who suffer as a result of dogs roaming about to take action. It would be understood that if people turned their dogs out first thing in the morning and allowed them to roam about, and if those dogs then caused accidents or were involved in sheep worrying, the owners would be involved in considerable expense as a result of demands for compensation.

People who have talked to farmers or have seen sheep and other animals suffering from worrying will know that it is a horrific sight. Farmers who have put in years of effort to build up the quality of their stock find that an hour or so of a pack of dogs chasing their sheep—and sometimes cattle and other animals—can cause great havoc to those stocks. It is horrific to see on the urban fringes packs of dogs attacking not only sheep, but cattle and ponies. Such incidents occur because people kick their dogs out and leave them to roam a round.

It is all very well for Conservative Members to point out that farmers are entitled to shoot dogs that are sheep-worrying. However, when I have talked to farmers who have shot dogs in such incidents, I find that they are most determined to take the dog back to the owner, tell the owner what damage the dog has done and demand compensation. A farmer who has lost 10 or 12 sheep as a result of worrying faces considerable expense. Any farmer who has suffered in that way or anyone who has an animal that is attacked on the urban fringes has a right to be able to go to the person who has irresponsibly let the dog out and to demand compensation for the damage done.

The big advantage of a system that involves dogs being tagged is that the owner can be identified. I make a strong plea for the registration scheme——

Mr. Butterfill: As it is presently the law that dogs should wear an identification tag, can the hon. Gentleman explain why the position would be different under a dog registration scheme? Would we not find that irresponsible dog owners would continue to fail to register and that responsible dog owners would register their dogs? Those dogs wear a collar and tag now.

Mr. Bennett: With a register, it would be possible for wardens fairly quickly to identify those whose dogs were not registered—[HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] Hon. Members may ask how. In my constituency, many dogs roam around. They are picked up by wardens and the owners then reclaim them. Under a registration scheme, it would be simple when a dog was picked up for the first time because people would not get the dog back until it was properly registered and tagged. We could then bring some control into the matter.

At present, dog wardens tell us that they round up dogs, that the dogs are reclaimed by the owners who pay for the short stay in the kennels and that, a week or two later, the dogs are back on the streets causing the same nuisance. An effective system of registration would stop people taking on dogs irresponsibly and would mean that wardens could chase up dogs that were not registered. We could also cut down on the problem of farmers who suffer from sheep worrying—and I am surprised that more Conservative Members do not have sympathy for farmers who suffer in that way and do not care more about the cruelty to the animals chased by dogs.

A registration scheme would also enable us to cut down on the problem of road accidents. Conservative Members who drive along motorways may see a dog going across the motorway—and many stray dogs run across motorways. However much we say firmly to ourselves that we will not swerve to avoid the dog if there is any possibility of an accident, the first instinctive reaction is to try to swerve to avoid the dog. It is surprising how many road accidents are caused as a result of a dog being on the highway. The dog is often killed, but it is almost impossible to find its owner and to make that owner responsible for the mayhem that the dog has caused.

I argue strongly that if we want to add tonight to the attempts to protect people from dogs, we should try to protect animals from worrying and to reduce the number of road accidents. An effective way to achieve that would be to introduce a dog registration scheme. Such a scheme would benefit dogs, as it would reduce the large number of dogs that are neglected by their owners who have lost enthusiasm for the dog that was bought or accepted as a gift on a whim.

I hope that the House will accept the new clause and add it to the Bill.

Mr. Marlow: I have been involved in canine politics since I was elected to the House 12 years ago. I have a son who is blind in one eye as a result of someone not worming their dog properly, and I am aware of the problems that can be caused by dogs.

For a long time, the Government did nothing. As a result, on 26 October 1983 I sought the leave of the House to introduce a Bill under the ten-minute rule to establish a dog registration scheme. My scheme was not dissimilar to

[Mr. Marlow]

the scheme outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) earlier this evening. The House was full at the time and I gained the support of 59 Opposition Members. A few Opposition Members went into the No Lobby and among them was the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He has subsequently made his point. However, as hon. Members are aware, in a ten-minute Bill, one sets out the principle of an issue and the majority of the colleagues of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook supported that principle. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is a man of principle—at least of flexible principle.

Dogs are lovely creatures, but they cause problems in three ways: through dirt and disease, through danger, injury and fear, and through noise,. I am not aware of any proposal to deal with the problem of dog noise although it must be the most depressing form of purgatory this side of Hades to be subjected to the constant discordant symphony of a neighbour's yapping dog. There may be a solution to that problem, but it cannot be achieved through a system of registration.

When I sought leave to introduce my Bill, nothing had been done about the problem. However, that is no longer the case. There are fairly minor provisions in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989. There are much more radical provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. I wonder how many of the registrationists are aware of the provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. According to that legislation, all dogs must be identified by wearing a collar and tag. By that identification they are directly connected to their owners. Local authorities are responsible for enforcing that legislation. Hefty fines are imposed on those who are not prepared to comply.

There is no evidence that such a regime will not be effective. In the unlikely event that it is not effective, I am puzzled that so many hon. Members believe that those who do not comply with the collar and tag legislation would comply with the much more irritating imposition of registration. The collar and tag has the added advantage of being visible evidence of identification, while registration is invisible.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland could add any species to the present legislation, without us passing this Bill, in relation to any species that may be acceptable, such as vulpes vulpinus or any other animal regarded as feral according to common law. Registration would not have the slightest effect on making that power of the Secretary of State for Scotland or that of the Home Secretary any less or any more effective.

Mr. Marlow: As always, I find what my hon. and learned Friend says most reassuring.

Local authorities also have the responsibility of the collection and removal of filth. It is most unlikely, therefore, that they would tolerate large numbers of strays. They would also, therefore, have an incentive to remove unidentified dogs. Over the years, the only dogs that would be in circulation would be those with collars and tags—they would be identified. Local authorities would be under the added pressure, Sir Paul, that you and I as Joe Citizen have the right to take the local authority to court to make sure that it carries out its requirements to keep the streets clean. Byelaws are being made available to assist—not least the pooper scoop byelaw, of which most hon. Members are aware. In large measure, the problems of filth and disease can now be overcome, and will be overcome, without registration.

11.15 pm

In the Bill, radical, strong action is now being taken against the dangerous dog and the very real terror that it strikes in the hearts of the young, the infirm and the elderly in particular. Fighting dogs will virtually be removed from circulation. Dangerous dogs can be subject to muzzling, and individual animals subjected to restriction orders. Owners of dogs causing dangerous nuisance will be subject, potentially, to large fines and even imprisonment.

The only argument that I have heard which favours the registration of dogs and with which I have long had a certain amount of sympathy is that it will encourage a responsible attitude towards dog ownership. One would not just get a dog if one had to register it first. It would be a disincentive against irresponsible dog ownership—I accept that. However, there is an insufficient understanding of the measures that we have already enacted and that we intend to enact this evening.

Irresponsible dog ownership is about to become a reckless option. Experience will show that registration is not necessary to encourage such responsibility. The issue before us is not whether to register or not to register, but how to overcome the problems of dog nuisance.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman has described most graphically and convincingly the need for extensive operations by local authorities, law enforcement agencies and many others to rid society of the menace of dangerous dogs and also to reduce nuisance. Who should pay for all that, if not dog owners?

Mr. Marlow: That point has been debated in many places on many occasions. Do we make the dog-owning community responsible for all the costs, or do we spread the costs across the whole community? The measures that the Government have brought forward so far, and the measures that are being suggested today, will change attitudes towards irresponsible dog ownership to such an extent that the costs about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned will not be so great as local authorities might first have feared. Therefore, it is a perfectly proper option to expect local authorities to take account of those responsibilities within their general financial provisions. I do not think that it is right to impose the licence regime that has been suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I am about to finish, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

Registration will not achieve anything that the measures already enacted and those about to be enacted will not achieve, but it will cost money and it will impose a burden without benefit on many law-abiding citizens. One thinks particularly of the owners of small, well-looked after dogs in rural areas. We would be imposing a burden on millions of our citizens. If we can solve a problem without messing people about, it is our duty to do so.

Mr. Hattersley: I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) on her initiative in tabling the new clause and on the authoritative and moderate manner in which she moved it—and a lot of good that did her with her own Back-Bench colleagues, who treated the new clause in a manner which was very often lacking in courtesy. That is because they never learn. Having pursued the bone-headed preoccupation with deregulation for 10 years and got the Government, their party and this country into a great deal of mess because of that preoccupation, they still believe that deregulation, with the Government standing back and not acting, is the solution to every problem. Between now and the general election they will learn that that is not the opinion of the British people. It would have been good if they had learnt that lesson before we had this debate on dog registration and if they had come to understand the advantages that dog registration would provide.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) showed the unthinking attitude that will become evident between now and 1 am on the subject. The right hon. Gentleman does not seem to have either read or understood the Bill. He repeated time and again that the Bill is intended to deal with two breeds of fighting dog. That is the purpose of one of the clauses. I support that clause, and I have said time and again, both inside and outside the House, that the Government are to be congratulated on the way they have dealt with that problem. Had the right hon. Gentleman read on beyond clause 2, however, he would have discovered that the Bill is designed to deal with other categories of dogs—in themselves dangerous but not, in the Government's opinion or in mine, so dangerous that the breed ought to be prohibited and eventually wiped out.

The question, therefore, is how we should deal with what I shall call the generality of dogs, many of which, perhaps most of which, are well looked after, and many of which, perhaps most of which, are kept under proper control, but some of which are not, and all of which are potentially dangerous in one way or another. There is not an organisation in the country, from the RSPCA to the Kennel Club, that does not concede that every dog can potentially cause damage and destruction. It may be by the sudden biting of a small child, it may be by running out into the road and causing an accident, or it may be for other reasons, but every dog is a potential source of danger.

Despite that fact, and despite the provisions in the Bill to deal with all dogs, the Home Secretary kept saying—he said it three times—that we ought to focus on what really matters, which is f ighting dogs, as though in some strange way the inclusion of the new clause in the Bill would diminish the power that the Bill provides to deal with pit bull terriers and tosas. It will do no such thing. The idea that by voting for the new clause we shall dilute the rest of the Bill is absolute nonsense. All the authoritative organisations argue that by voting for the new clause we would strengthen the Bill and make the rest of it more likely to work in practice, for three or four specific reasons which I shall shortly describe. Before doing so, however, I wish to deal with what have been and with what will continue to be the objections to the new clause.

We shall be told that the miscreants—the people for whom, according to those who support registration, registration is most necessary—will be the people who are least likely to register. We shall be told that registration does not, of itself, provide any protection. We shall also be told that registration is excessively bureaucratic. We were told all those things specifically by the Home Secretary, explicitly in relation to the registration of pit bull terriers and tosas. He now accepts that those three arguments do not apply. They are just as bogus for dogs in general as they are for pit bull terriers. As the Home Secretary has come to realise that fact, I hope that some of his right hon. and hon. Friends will come to realise it, too.

The Government are determined that this debate will continue until 1 am, and it is important that as many hon. Members who want to do so should have the opportunity to speak. I shall therefore be brief. All that I wish to do is to make again the case that I tried to make on Second Reading—a positive case for a register. As the right hon. Member for Woking said, it is true that about a quarter of all the serious assaults by dogs in the capital last year were by one breed—pit bull terriers—but it will not have escaped the right hon. Gentleman's attention that if only a quarter of the assaults were by pit bull terriers, the special category for which we are taking special powers, three quarters of those assaults were by other breeds of dog that reasonable people believe ought to be kept under control and supervision.

One way of doing that is to extend the powers that the Home Secretary rightly intends to extend. It can be done by extending the categories of dogs that can be treated most severely. I hope and trust that that extension will prove not to be necessary, as I am sure does the right hon. Gentleman. It can be done by extending the powers to enable the courts to insist on muzzling and on dogs being kept in a safe place and eventually, although I remain sceptical about the Government's determination, by taking the power to insist that all dog owners take out third party insurance to protect those who may be injured by their pets.

All those measures are in themselves desirable. We have hoped for and supported all of them, but the one extra step of registration has an overwhelming advantage with which even the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) agrees—and if he perceives it, surely everyone else can. Registration will increase the climate of responsibility among dog owners and encourage people to realise that owning a dog is not something to be undertaken frivolously or lightly, or undertaken for a moment before the dog is abandoned. I mean "abandoned" in both senses of the word—abandoning the concept of responsibility and abandoning the dog. Too often, particularly after Christmas, dogs are abandoned on motorways and streets.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North, I believe, asked why the body of responsible and respectable dog owners who cherish and look after their pets should be required to meet some of the costs involved in forcing the irresponsible owners into registration. Every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate has announced his credentials. I was brought up in a family that always had dogs. My mother still has a dog. I do not have a dog in London, because I do not believe that it is responsible to have a dog living in the centre of London. One of the things to which I look forward when I shuffle off this place is going to Yorkshire and living a life that enables me to own a dog.

The people I know who are the most responsible owners of dogs are also among the people most keen on

[Mr. Hattersley]

registration. Responsible dog owners know that registration protects dogs. I repeat what I said on Second Reading, because it is important. Everyone knows of even reputable kennels—not the dog farmers or the people who breed cross-bred puppies and then give them away to anyone who comes along—which sell dogs in large numbers before Christmas in the certain knowledge that, a few days afterwards, a high percentage will be abandoned or given away.

If those reputable dealers were required by law to insist that whoever purchases one of their dogs registers the dog and accepts that legal responsibility, the casual way in which, too often, dogs are bought and then abandoned would certainly be reduced. That is why, in my experience, responsible dog owners would gladly pay a small fee to extend the responsibility that they feel to a wider group. I repeat what all responsible organisations say—that, as well as protecting dogs, registration would increase the climate of responsibility, which would also protect people.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), who intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Drake—I think that he thought he was amusing—said that farmers would still shoot registered dogs if they savaged sheep. I am sure that that is so, but the object of registration is to make owners so responsible that sheep do not get savaged in the first place—to make the owner say, "I have a legal responsibility for this dog."

Mr. Butterfill: It is a shame that the right hon. Gentleman impugns the intelligence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). If the right hon. Gentleman cared to read my right hon. Friend's speech, he would find that he misunderstood what he said. But that is beside the point. Sheep savaging is appalling, but if the present law were adequately enforced, identification of dogs and dog ownership would be equally responsible. All that the right hon. Gentleman wants to do is to produce unnecessary bureaucracy.

Mr. Hattersley: If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about bureaucracy, I will repeat one point for him. If the Home Secretary chose, he could act gradually, breed by breed. The hon. Member for Drake has allowed for much flexibility in the way in which measures could be introduced. I would introduce exactly the same bureaucracy for some breeds as the Home Secretary already advocates and as is now to be introduced for pit bull terriers which are exempted under the extinction orders. I am prepared to extend the principle, just as the Home Secretary should be, if he is to be consistent with the latest position that he has adopted on this issue.

Finally, if we are to have a society in which dogs are cared for in a way that will protect both the public and the dogs, the Government must inculcate a general atmosphere of responsibility. In the view of all the authorities and organisations concerned, a dog registration scheme would help to create that atmosphere.

I ask Conservative Members, who have spent the past 13 years believing that their views and ideology are always right and that nothing that conflicts with their views could ever be right, to consider the possibility that, on the subject of a registration scheme, the RSPCA, the Royal Society of Veterinary Surgeons, the National Farmers Union, the Automobile Association and the Police Federation, members of which all have deep and personal interests in this matter, might just know what they are talking about —and they all say that registration will make dog owners more responsible and will, in the short term, help to solve the problem.

11.30 pm

I do not say, and none of my hon. Friends would say, that a registration scheme would solve all the problems —nor, I am sure, would the Home Secretary, with all his confidence, say that his Bill would meet all the problems —but we are struggling for some marginal improvement. I have no doubt that registration would bring about a more than marginal improvement—indeed, that the improvement would be significant.

Whether or not the House introduces such a scheme this evening, sooner or later, one will be introduced because it is what all those involved with dogs want. Only the irresponsible are against it—the irresponsible dog owners and the irresponsible politicians who hold the little view about deregulation and cannot think outside that prejudice.

I hope that the House will support the new clause, because we know for certain that it is the majority view of the House. As I have said, if that view is frustrated and the new clause is not included in the Bill, it will be only because the Government have insisted on the vote being held in the small hours of the morning and have whipped their Members as strongly as they could to support their narrow, prejudiced view. If the new clause is not passed now, it will return sooner or later, in one place or another, to become the law of the land.

11.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): Those who have been following the debate will know that the Bill deals with dangerous dogs and goes much wider than pit bull terriers and Japanese tosas. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has acknowledged the provisions of clause 1, about which there is general consensus in the House.

Clause 2 deals with various breeds of dogs and gives the Home Secretary reserve powers, which can be exercised only with the full approval of both Houses of Parliament, to designate a particular breed if he feels that it is a serious danger to the public, and to impose muzzling or leashing orders upon that breed—as opposed to individual dogs. That power is circumscribed because it is a considerable power to which I believe that certain of the dog interests would object strongly. I do not believe that the RSPCA would welcome the exercise of that power, but I am empowered and, indeed, statutorily required by the Bill to discuss the way in which it is used.

Clause 3 deals with the generality of dogs and with the penalties that will arise when an owner allows his dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. That is an effective and significant change. We are dealing not only with the fighting dogs or with rottweilers and alsatians: the provisions apply to any dog and impose severe penalties on owners, such as six months' imprisonment or a £5,000 fine. Embedded in that clause is a very important order-making power for the magistrates courts. If someone complains to a magistrate that a dog is out of control, even if it has not savaged anybody, considerable restrictions could be placed upon it.

The Bill therefore considerably increases the powers that are available to the courts and to the various bodies in our land that deal with the problem of dangerous and vicious dogs. It is inevitable and appropriate that any dog legislation should involve a debate on registration, but, in the light of what I have said, I know that many of my hon. Friends do not see the link between dealing with dangerous dogs and registration. I say to those who are enthusiastic about registration that I believe that it would have had no effect on the three severe attacks recently—in each instance, ownership was clearly identified—and no effect on the attitude of the owners.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) says, first, that registration would enhance responsible ownership. Secondly, she says that dogs should be clearly identified. Finally, she argues that costs would be moderate, sensible and easily affordable. I think that I do no disservice to my hon. Friend's arguments.

Would responsible ownership be enhanced? If a registration scheme is to be respected, it must be enforceable. The dilemma that supporters of a registration scheme always have to face is that the responsible owner will comply with it. We heard a moving speech from the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), who said that while he is a Member of Parliament he is not prepared to have a dog. That is because he is so busy that he would not have time to train the dog and the puppy, which would require so many hours a day. That is the attitude of the responsible person, and clearly someone who has that attitude would comply with a registration scheme. Such a person will comply with the Bill's provisions when they are enacted. He is someone who trains and disciplines his dogs and looks after them properly. Such an owner is causing no trouble at present.

If registration is to be effective, it must bear down on the irresponsible—those who do not keep their dogs on a leash in the park and those who let their dogs jump up at other people. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Drake has examined the Bill's provisions, which bear upon these very matters precisely. I do not believe that by having a registration scheme we shall see a change in attitude towards the ownership of dogs, and those who advocate a registration scheme are inclined to oversell it. If they believe that registration will change attitudes and make everyone responsible owners——

Mr. Frank Cook: Does the Home Secretary agree that the logic that he is using to try to destroy some of the rationale behind the new clause could be applied equally to firearms certificates? The person who does not have a firearms certificate is the irresponsible owner and the person who does is responsible. Would he extend his logic and dismiss firearm certificates? Would he not rather join those of us who are clearer in thought and who accept the logic of the need for a dog registration scheme?

Mr. Baker: The matters are very different. The ownership of firearms in our society is much more restricted than the ownership of dogs, and firearms are much more expensive than dogs. I do not believe that there is a fair comparison.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Drake that the powers in clause 3 deal with the responsibility of owners. I know that she and the RSPCA support them.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Baker: I understand that many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, and I suggest that I do not give way. In earlier debates I gave way many times and I think now that it would be better to proceed with my speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Drake talked about identification. As she rightly says, if we can link ownership with the name of a dog and a registered address, the present position will be improved. I agree with that. In recent incidents, however, the identification of the owner was not an issue. In all cases it was quite easy to identify the owner. When vicious attacks take place it is nearly always quite easy to identify the owner, unless the dog is a stray. When dealing with vicious, savage dogs, I fail to see that there is a link between them and identification. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Drake has raised a serious point, which must be addressed, about the identification of dogs. Several hon. Members expressed concern about the number of strays in their constituencies and they wanted to know the present law on dog identification.

Under section 13 of the Animal Health Act 1981, dogs are required to wear collars and tags in a public place. The penalty for non-compliance is a £2,000 fine, which will soon rise to £5,000. My hon. Friend the Member for Drake was right, however, to say that, although that law is on the statute book nothing much is happening about it. I have good news for my hon. Friend: when section 151 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is brought into force from 1 April 1992, it will place a duty on district councils

[Mr. Baker]

and London boroughs to enforce the dog collar requirement. I know that my hon. Friend will welcome that.

Section 149 of the 1990 Act will also be brought into force at the same time and districts will be responsible for appointing dog wardens and the picking up, detaining and, if possible, returning of stray dogs to their owners. The district councils and London boroughs will have responsibility for both of those important control measures. Those controls, together with those in the Bill, will go an enormous way towards achieving what my hon. Friend the Member for Drake wants to achieve and what she has spent a great deal of her life promoting—the role of responsible ownership.

The third argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake related to the cost of registration. My hon. Friend was right to say that some animal welfare organisations have voluntary registration schemes. They charge low fees of about £3 or £4. I know that my hon. Friend would be first to recognise, however, that those schemes are inexpensive because they are voluntary—therefore they do not have to bear any enforcement costs—and because they cater for what might be described as the easy end of the market, those responsible owners who choose to register and insure their dog and take great care to ensure that it causes no harm to others. Such voluntary registration schemes are not a reasonable basis on which to estimate the likely fee for a general dog registration scheme.

We have some guidance on those costs, because the London School of Economics was asked to estimate them by the RSPCA in 1989. The total cost amounts to £46 million per year of which £23 million would be for dog wardens and associated kennelling. The other £23 million would go on the administration of the system. I understand that another £4·5 million should be added for the initial cost of registering about 700,000 dogs each year—if one assumes that there are 7 million dogs, which live for 10 years, that is equivalent to registering 700,000 a year. The total cost in 1989 was put at about £50 million—equivalent today to about £60 million.

It would be necessary to charge a much greater fee than the £3 or £4 suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake to cover the cost of the scheme. The cost also depends on the percentage of owners who comply. If one has 100 per cent. compliance, the cost can be spread over 7 million dogs. However, in Northern Ireland the rate of compliance is below 50 per cent. and in the Republic of Ireland it is below 30 per cent.

Mr. William Ross: If the right hon. Gentleman knows that compliance is below 30 per cent. in Northern Ireland, how did he get the total figure?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman must have misheard me. I said that compliance was just below 50 per cent. in Northern Ireland and that in the Republic it was 30 per cent. The hon. Gentleman would expect Northern Ireland to be more law-abiding in this matter than the Republic. *[Interruption.]* Only in this matter.

Many countries have a requirement to register dogs, but it is one of the most unobserved laws. Italy and Spain have systems of registration, but there is scant regard for them. In Spain the fee is about £27. The LSE has estimated that a registration scheme could cost £60 million. That could be met by a one-off payment of £121 payable for life, or by a fee of £29 payable for initial registration with £9 payable annually thereafter. That level of fees raises a second tranche of questions about whether certain people should be exempted.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

11.45 pm

Mr. Baker: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who will no doubt have the opportunity to speak in a moment.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman today, but I will hear his point.

Mr. Maclennan: I do not want to detain the House, but the Home Secretary mentioned the LSE figures. He gave only the debit side; he did not mention the LSE calculations of the existing cost of dealing with stray dogs, which would be met by a registration scheme. He will have the up-to-date figures, but even in 1989 the cost to the public was £70 million. That was met not from a registration scheme, but from other funds.

Mr. Baker: I should not have given way to the hon. Gentleman. The cost of dealing with strays is included in the current level of expenditure. They are dealt with sometimes by the police, sometimes by vets, sometimes by the RSPCA and sometimes by dog wardens. That is already happening, so we are discussing extra costs.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has committed the Labour party to a dog registration scheme. He did not give any details about it this evening. I am not surprised, because I have searched the records to find Hattersley on dogs, and it is a rare entry. I could find Hattersley on constitutional reform, Hattersley on freedom of information, Hattersley on cricket, Hattersley on Yorkshire, Hattersley on food—but Hattersley on dogs was a rare entry. I was hoping that he would tell us how he envisages the scheme. In the last two documents published by his party, he committed it to a dog registration scheme. The House should know whether the scheme is to be self-financing or subsidised. Would the right hon. Gentleman like to tell us?

Mr. Hattersley: I am supporting the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes), who was kind enough to explain to the Home Secretary, in the belief that he would take it in and deal with it, that she is proposing a very wide discretion for the Home Secretary of the day. When the new Home Secretary is in place, whoever he may be, I am sure that he will not try to misquote the figures, as the right hon. Gentleman did until he was caught out by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). The new Home Secretary will be sensible enough to know that the scheme will represent a saving rather than a liability.

Mr. Baker: That was the most extraordinary piece of arithmetic, which should be drawn to the attention of the shadow Chancellor immediately. Everybody recognises that there is a cost for registering 7 million dogs. There is the computer cost and the cost of enforcement. The LSE, at the request of the RSPCA, put that at £60 million.

The right hon. Gentleman did not answer my question. Is the scheme to be self-financing or is it to be subsidised? Until he answers, how can we know what the level of fee will be? He is going to the country with a scheme that is uncosted. He is trying to persuade people that it is likely to cost a few pounds, when in fact it is likely to cost £10 or £20—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition want a dog registration scheme, but they do not have an idea among them of how it would be run. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be more specific.

I have tried to explain why I do not think that a dog registration scheme would be effective in promoting responsible ownership. Collaring and tagging, the proposals in clause 3 and the other measures in the Bill will effectively achieve that, and commend all those provisions to the House.

Mr. Maclennan: I would not have made this speech had not the Home Secretary made it abundantly plain that he had wholly misunderstood the case for registration, and also misrepresented the arguments of his hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes). Her new clause is linked with new clause 5, which stands in my name and that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), although, if it comes to a vote, I will readily support the hon. Lady's new clause in preference to my own.

The Secretary of State is scraping the bottom of the barrel if he has to juggle figures to conceal the benefit to the public of a registration scheme.

Dr. Reid: The Home Secretary not only juggled the figures, but completely misrepresented the argument put not only by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) but by Opposition Members. According to the right hon. Gentleman, it was being suggested that a simple registration scheme would bring about a total and fundamental change in responsibility. What was actually suggested—and repeated three or four times—was that such a scheme wold add significantly to owner responsibility. No one suggested that it would lead to a revolution.

Mr. Maclennan: All who have spoken in favour of a registration scheme have made extremely modest claims for it—none more than the hon. Member for Drake, to whose persuasive arguments hon. Members on both sides of the House listened very carefully. I am sure that, if any hon. Members came into the Chamber tonight without having made up their minds already, they would have been influenced by what she said.

What I found particularly surprising—even more bizarre than all that playing with figures, which the Home Secretary might have thought that he could get away with at this time of night—was the right hon. Gentleman's failure to recognise the strength of expert opinion. I do not set myself up as a dog expert. I cannot imagine that the right hon. Gentleman considers me sufficiently important to merit the trawl for quotes to which he has subjected the utterances of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but he may wish to confirm that I have never before spoken about dogs in the House. I do, however, pay considerable attention to what is said by those who have had direct experience of dealing with dogs, and who run dog warden schemes—local authorities; the police, who must try to enforce the law as it stands and who are aware of its inadequacies; and the National Farmers Union in both Scotland and England, which is concerned about the damage done by dangerous dogs that worry livestock.

We should be extremely unwise to turn our back on all those bodies when they are saying the same things. The fact that the Home Secretary did not even mention that clear consensus suggests that he is playing to a very small gallery of supporters immediately behind him; certainly he is not directing his remarks to wider opinion outside. Most people would be utterly mystified by his unwillingness to listen to, or engage with, the arguments deployed by such responsible bodies as the RSPCA, and by all the other organisations that must deal with the problem of half a million stray dogs roaming around.

Obviously, the Bill deals primarily with dangerous dogs, and it was in that connection that new clause 1 was tabled. It can be justified on the ground that it is intended to strengthen new clause 3, in particular. That is not the only justification. There will be many other benefits. Dogs can not only be dangerous but cause a substantial nuisance and disease. For all those reasons, the Home Secretary could have shown a little humility and accepted the advice of those who know better, and who have had responsibility for dealing with the issue rather longer than he has.

Mr. Devlin: I find myself in an interesting position, because I am agnostic about this issue. When I first entered the House, I supported my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) in her proposal for a dog registration scheme. I did so because there are 7·5 million dogs in this country, and far too many of them are running stray around my constituency. I felt that, if we introduced a sensible registration fee that everyone would have to pay before they were allowed to own a dog, it would serve as a major disincentive—with only those people who were serious would become dog owners. I envisaged them paying a substantial fee of £50 or £60 when they bought a dog. I envisaged also an annual registration fee, with the use of a coloured disc on the dog's collar, for example, to identify those who were registered. Those that were not would be destroyed.

That is a good principle but—as I said in an earlier intervention—I accepted another good principle, which is that everyone should pay something towards the cost of local government. I voted for the community charge on the basis that we live in an age in which computers can solve all our problems. We were assured by everyone that the running costs would be relatively low and that the bureaucracy would not grow.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) told me that that was all nonsense—that the bureaucracy would mushroom and that costs would soar. We did not believe him, because the experts told us about schemes running in different parts of the world, and assured us that we would be able to contain the costs. In any event, the community charge would only be about £250 in Stockton-on-Tees. On that basis, about half the population would have been better off and half worse off, and on that basis it was a fair principle.

We went with it, and in the first year the community charge was £430. We have now been compelled to introduce the reduction scheme. We heard arguments about pensioners, student nurses, and all sorts of other people who could not afford to pay. All kinds of exemptions were being claimed by different interests.

[Mr. Devlin]

What is the dog registration scheme, after one has stripped it away, but a poll tax for dogs? The intention is to impose a head tax on 7·5 million dogs. We shall tax every single one of them, which will require an army of inspectors. Just as with students, there will be dogs that disappear somewhere into the system. Then we shall have to charge something more to those who pay to compensate for those who do not. The extra £19 that has to be paid in Stockton-on-Tees to compensate for those who do not pay their poll tax is very much resented.

One must consider also the other bureaucratic problems. I wonder whether it is a good idea to support new clause 1. Is the problem a gap in the existing law or lack of enforcement? I listened with interest when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that provision is made in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to make local authorities enforce the existing law. I remember that clause, because I spoke on it when the House debated it.

Once we enforce the existing law, we must ask ourselves what more will be achieved by introducing an extra poll tax for dogs with all the attendant bureaucracy that will go with it. If every dog wears a collar carrying a tag with its name and that of its owner, we shall be able to trace the owner. In respect of dogs whose owners one can trace, provisions in the animals, dogs and guard dogs legislation can be applied to cover almost every eventuality. In respect of the really dangerous fighting dogs—tosas and American pit bull terriers—the provisions of the present Bill will apply. I am beginning to wonder what more will be achieved if we go the whole hog and accept a full-scale registration scheme.

12 midnight

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I am entertained by the parallel that my hon. Friend draws with the poll tax, but does he not agree that if it is a parallel in principle, that principle has already been accepted for dangerous dogs, in respect of which the Government have agreed that a registration scheme supplies the remedy?

Mr. Devlin: I think that the situation is rather different. [HON. MEMBERS: "You would, wouldn't you?"] Yes, I would, and I will tell the House why. If all tosas and American pit bull terriers are neutered and muzzled in public, the breeds will die out. That means that we are looking at a short-term problem; registration will not continue into the indefinite future. If similar arrangements were applied in respect of all 7·5 million dogs, however, the bureaucracy involved would be nightmarish.

I fully support the principle of what my hon. Friend the Member for Drake is trying to do. I want there to be a lot fewer dogs in this country, and I certainly want to see a major reduction in the amount of dog mess in every part of our community. It ruins all our parks and public places and is a grave danger to children, and my constituents feel very strongly about it. In one part of my constituency—Thornaby—we have large packs of stray dogs roaming around. I want those dogs destroyed, but I know that, come the day when we start destroying large numbers of dogs, the dog lovers will be after us. We are in a no-win situation and, frankly, this is one of those questions in respect of which it is best to remain agnostic. Whatever we decide, we shall upset someone. Either we shall upset dog owners or we shall——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Devlin: No, I shall not give way because I want to conclude,

Dame Janet Fookes: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Devlin: In a moment.

I go back to what I learned with the poll tax. If we expect the project to cost us £40 million, it will end up costing us £80 million or even £100 million. Then the Treasury will get hold of the idea and say, "Here's a nice little earner to add to the yearly increases in duty on cigarettes and alcohol and so on." Before we know where we are, the cost of registration will be £100 a year. Then we shall have student nurses and pensioners queueing up and saying, "Why can't we have a rebate? We cannot afford that amount."

Dame Janet Fookes: I fail to understand how my hon. Friend can apparently support registration for one set of dogs but not for the rest, and as for his concern about upsetting one group or another whatever we do, if that really worries him, he ought to leave politics immediately.

Mr. Devlin: I am grateful for the advice, but I am afraid that I shall disappoint my hon. Friend and stay here for a considerable period resolving such dilemmas in the best interests of my constituents. Large numbers of my constituents have written to me in support of a dog registration scheme because the RSPCA has led them to believe that it is a panacea. I recognise, however, that I have been sent to this place not merely to articulate the wishes of that minority which shouts the loudest but to use my judgment. My judgment in this case is that any Government who introduce a dog registration scheme, thus placing a burden on every dog owner in the country will not end up a popular Administration. I say that to Labour Members in case they feel like introducing such a scheme when they are next in power—if they ever are.

On balance, and after considering these matters carefully, I do not feel that the new clause deserves my support in the Lobby tonight.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): The Home Secretary is not in his place at the moment, but I found his speech disappointing. It showed that he is totally out of touch, not merely with feeling in the country on this issue, but also —as has been pointed out by many hon. Members—with the feelings of the experts, the people who know what is happening with dogs at grass roots level.

I am totally in support of the new clause. I have been a strong supporter of dog registration and of more restraint on dogs for a long time. I feel that we have too many dogs in this country and that too many people individually own too many dogs.

Registration is not a panacea—it will not stop people being attacked by dogs or solve all the problems that have been mentioned by hon. Members—but it is a start. It is about changing the attitudes of the many people in this country who still feel that having a dog gives them a right not to look after it properly, as many people do not, and a right to allow the dog to behave in whatever way they feel is proper. That is not merely a risk to children in the streets, because of all the diseases that we know about, but is also a risk to car drivers because of accidents with dogs. We know all about the statistics.

Registration is about changing people's attitudes so that they will realise that buying a dog means taking responsibility for it. Because there is no legislation linking dog ownership with getting the dog in the first place, there is no opportunity to make people feel responsible. Until we start that, we shall not change people's attitudes.

Ten years ago people had the attitude that it was all right to smoke where one liked, that it did not matter and that there was no such thing as risks from passive smoking. Gradually we have changed people's attitudes about that.

Some people, such as the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) have fought on this issue for a number of years. It used to be unpopular to take up the issue of dog abuse, dogs fouling the pavements, dogs in parks or being allowed to run around in housing estates at risk. The position has changed because the RSPCA, the League for the Introduction of Canine Control and other such organisations have fought hard for the issue to be raised, not merely in the House but throughout the country.

If we do not take this step forward tonight, the subject will be back. I am sure that the Bill will get through the Lords and that we shall be debating it again in a month or so. I have been a Member of Parliament for only two years and no issue has been discussed more than dogs—*[Interruption.]* One of the problems with late night debates is that the standard of behaviour goes down. This issue will return.

Several hon. Members mentioned Northern Ireland and the fact that only 50 per cent. of dog owners have registered there. Perhaps it is 50 per cent. or perhaps it is 55 per cent., but the Ulster Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has said that the number of strays has decreased. That is what we are talking about—trying to create a climate in this country in which people do not think that it is acceptable for dogs to run around loose or be allowed to do more or less what they like. Unless we start off with registration—using the money that results to bring in more dog wardens, and to educate people to realise when they register a dog that they must have it wormed every year and ensure that it is kept in a proper place and is properly exercised—we shall not solve the problem.

Mr. William Ross: Before one gets possession of a dog, or even a pup, in Northern Ireland one must have a licence for it. That is also part and parcel of the reason why the number of dogs has decreased. Does the hon. Lady agree that it might do all hon. Members a world of good if they went down to the Vote Office, got a copy of the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, and read it through?

Miss Hoey: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. People should not be able to buy a dog as easily as they can buy an ice cream. They should have to prove that they can look after it and pay a registration fee, just as they do for a television licence or a firearms certificate, although I do not suggest that the cost should be the same.

One of the most appalling comments that the Home Secretary made—not in today's debate, but a few weeks ago when speaking on the need for legislation on dangerous dogs, which we all support—was that other incidents involving dogs had been just normal dog bites. There is no such thing as a normal dog bite. Children, adults, and the thousands of postmen and postwomen who have suffered such attacks know that such incidents are not normal and should not be accepted as such. We must recognise that the Bill does not go far enough, as attacks on postmen and postwomen often occur on private property.

The Home Secretary may think that he will manage to scrape through by two votes, but the issue will not go away. I am sure that we shall reconsider it when we debate Lords amendments, but we have an opportunity tonight to vote for dog registration and to bring the issue to an end.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): May I first congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame Janet Fookes) on tabling the new clause? Every right hon. and hon. Member is aware of her passionate and sincerely held views on dog registration, and we all admire and respect her for them.

I came to the House in 1987 and shared the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). I had an open mind on dog registration and was prepared to be persuaded of the case for a registration scheme, provided it met the criteria advanced by its proposers. The more I have considered the scheme and the more it has been debated, argued and counter-argued, the more I have become convinced that it is not a panacea for the problems of stray dogs and dog ownership.

It is important that more is done to control dogs, especially stray dogs, but we heard the announcement this evening by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, that the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will come into force from next April and that all dogs will be made to wear a collar with an identifiable tag. I am not naive enough to pretend that that will be easy to achieve, but it must be achieved, and the Home Office has a role to play in publicising the law before it comes into force to ensure that people are aware of it and comply with it.

The horrific attacks by dogs that have been highlighted in the past few years and the problem of stray dogs, which is prevalent throughout the country, would not be curbed by a dog registration scheme. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that a registration scheme would not necessarily make dog owners more responsible.

I also believe that because, although an individual may be a responsible dog owner, that does not necessarily mean that he or she would register his or her dog under a dog registration scheme. We had a dog licence scheme for many years in this country, and I suspect that thousands, if not millions, of perfectly responsible dog owners refused, or did not bother, to buy a dog licence. I suspect that that would also be the case with a dog registration scheme.

More importantly, I think that we would all find that irresponsible dog owners would certainly not want to register their dogs, if only because they would not want to pay any money. A number of figures for the cost of the dog's registration have been bandied about in this debate. I suspect that a fee of £3 per dog is on the low side. When the scheme came into force, I think that the fee would be far higher, which would prove an even greater deterrent for dog owners to register their dogs.

12.15 am

Even if dog owners did register their dogs, we would not see an end to the horrific attacks on children and adults that have taken place in this country. In the past 18 months, the owner of the dog involved in every attack that has taken place has been identified. Identification has not been the problem—the problem has been that the dog's

owner was irresponsible enough not to be able to control that dog in a public place. The Bill will go a long way towards trying to rectify that problem. People may argue, with some justification, that we need not a dog registration scheme, but a scheme to register the owners to ensure that they are more responsible in the way in which they look after their dogs.

I also believe that, if we had a dog registration scheme, not only would there be mass avoidance, but there would still be dogs straying around. As supporters of the scheme would argue, if the owners of those dogs had registered their pets, they would be easily identified. The same would be true under the laws that are to come into force next April, because if people comply with the law of giving their dog a collar and tag, they too will be able to identify the dog, so that the problems of bureaucracy and cost are eliminated.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Surely my hon. Friend would agree that the problem of strays stems from the problem of irresponsible owners. If someone goes into a pet shop or to a breeder to buy a dog, would it not be better if that person had to fill in their name and address and describe the dog on an application form for registration and pay to have their dog registered? Would not that engender a greater sense of responsibility and reduce the stray problem?

Mr. Burns: I understand my hon. Friend's point. If someone goes to a breeder to buy his or her dog, that may be true. But I suspect that many breeders, particularly those who own dogs and allow them to have puppies to make a bit of money on the side, will not bother with ensuring that the dogs they sell, give away or pass on are registered and linked into a scheme. Therefore, a majority of dogs that are sold or given to other people may not be registered. How exactly will a dog registration scheme work? My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake said that it would be up to the Home Secretary of the day to fill in the details, which I accept. However, even if the Home Secretary of the day—whoever he or she may be—fills in the details, there will be problems.

Who is to be exempted from the scheme? Will all pensioners be exempted? Will the richer pensioners as well as the genuinely less well-off pensioners be exempted? If that is the case, those who do not fit that category and who are not exempted will have to pay more, thereby increasing the fee and reducing the number of people prepared to register their dogs. Will all the unemployed be exempted from registering their dogs and from paying a fee, or only from paying a fee? People go in and out of work, so there will be confusion and added bureaucracy which will, again, add to the costs. Will children be exempted from paying the fee? That will again increase the costs.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman is asking many rhetorical questions, which I will not attempt to answer. His hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) said that these matters should not be considered as questions of principle, but could be adapted in the way that the House considered appropriate.

Mr. Burns: I would have been gratefull if the hon. Gentleman had had the courtesy to listen to what I was saying. I said when I embarked on my line of argument that I do not think that we should be expected to vote this evening for a pig in a poke. We should know more about what a dog registration scheme would mean.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Burns: It would be wrong to give a blank cheque to an idea when many of my right hon. and hon Friends—and, I suspect, some Opposition Members—have genuine concerns about the nitty-gritty details of a dog registration scheme.

Mr. Butterfill: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. While we are dealing with the nitty-gritty details, will my hon. Friend agree that, if we are to have a dog registration scheme, we should need to have a power of entry into homes where it was suspected that an unregistered dog was being kept? Would not that offend hon. Members who are concerned about civil liberties?

Mr. Burns: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He has mentioned another aspect that would cause grave concern to many people.

There is another area about which there would be grave concern—perhaps not now, when the issue is being focused on, but if we had a dog registration scheme. If silicon chips were planted into dogs, many dog owners would be nervous and genuinely upset about their pets—rightly or wrongly. If there were accidents when a silicon chip was being implanted, many people would be gravely concerned, and that could be a deterrent to others.

I fully appreciate that the new clause is a well-meant attempt to help to combat the problems of stray dogs and of the irresponsible ownership of dogs. However, I fear that it is not the right measure to succeed. My right hon. Friend's proposals and other measures that are to come into force should be given the chance to work before we go down the route of a plethora of controls, bureaucracy and costs.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The House will be aware that, on previous occasions, I have been extremely critical of the proposed registration scheme. However, I recognise that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) has been flexible and accommodating in the new clause. More importantly, she has also provided for a two-year period before the Secretary of State has to lay an order. That gives an opportunity for the Government to take the action that has long been required.

I recall that 14 years ago, at the time of a Cruft's show in the late 1970s, I urged that there should be a change in the existing dog licensing scheme. The principal defect in that scheme was that people were supposed to get the licence when the puppy was six months old. Often they did not know when the puppy was six months old and by the time the puppy was six months old, they did not want it anyway so it joined the strays.

That was followed by the abolition of the halfpenny which was the fundamental cause of the confusion that the House has been tackling for the past two years. With the abolition of the halfpenny when the dog licence cost 37½p, the Government had to decide to take action. They took action by attempting to get out from under.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and other hon. Members have frequently sought to get private Members' Bills through the House to deal with the problem. Every time hon. Members have

tried to introduce Bills on that subject, the Government have spoiled the Bills' chances by trying to ensure that all responsibility was passed from the Government to the local authorities. However, when we consider the kind of problem that has landed on the Home Office in recent months, we see that the burden of responsibility cannot and should not be passed to local authorities.

An anxiety that I have expressed in the House before is that I do not believe that the licence fee should be left entirely to local authorities. If that is the case, the fee in one area may be £10, but it might be £50 in the local authority across the road. Such a preposterously uneven situation would be unacceptable. It is possible to discern such a position under new clause 1.

According to the new clause, local authorities may determine or the Secretary of State may prescribe. That is not a particularly satisfactory part of the new clause. It should be clear that there would be sufficient pressure on the next Home Secretary—the present Home Secretary will not hold his office when these matters will have to be decided by the House—to accept that full responsibility should not be passed to local authorities.

As my earlier intervention may have shown, I have reservations about the method of identification. There are unacceptable aspects of tattooing. The hon. Member for Drake may be right: the identification chip may be a satisfactory method, but I believe that in many breeds of active dog the chip would move around the dog's body or be damaged when the dog was active.

One of my dogs is an Irish wolfhound. Although the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) suggested that Irish wolfhounds were a dangerous breed, centuries of domestication have made them safe. The hon. Member said that a four-year-old child was at risk from an Irish wolfhound. Well, several Irish wolfhounds I know would be terrified by four-year-old children.

I have used my Irish wolfhound on several occasions to demolish obstructions to public rights of way in my constituency. My dog will not jump, but he will go through an obstruction, if another dog jumps over it. We have carefully preserved rights of way on several occasions. However, when preserving those rights of way, it is perfectly possible that a chip lodged in the back of my dog's neck might be damaged or removed. I should like to see evidence that that method of identification is as reliable as some people claim. There are disputed views about that. The time allowed in the new clause for implementation of its recommendations gives us the opportunity to establish the truth.

On balance, and with great reluctance, I will support the new clause. There is an anti-dog lobby of which I am certainly not a member. However, many hon. Members have today referred to a variety of breeds of dog most of which are quite harmless in spite of the more idiotic members of our community who ruin their temperaments. Some breeds were mentioned in the same breath as those that sometimes cause problems and the fighting breeds with which the Bill seeks to deal.

My anxiety concerns clause 2. It seems that if those who object to licensing are not careful, they will force the Government into a position in which a whole host of breeds will be added to the Bill if a licensing provision is not available. My colleagues who believe that I should continue to oppose the registration of dogs might care to consider that the alternative might mean a substantial addition to the dogs covered by clause 2. A large number of people would not wish their dogs to be covered and have no need for their dogs to be included in such a list.

As has been said, the registration of dogs will not be a panacea. The answer in the first place would have been to implement existing law before the dog licence was abolished so that people did not allow dogs to stray and so that dogs wore a collar with a name tag. Much anxiety and much time of the House would have been saved.

I shall vote for the new clause, but I give the hon. Member for Drake notice that I shall seek to ensure in the months ahead that, if it is accepted, the new clause will not impose unreasonable burdens on dog owners, particularly responsible ones, or provide excessive power to local authorities, when it should be exercised by the Government of the day. I should certainly like to be satisfied that the methods of identification will be satisfactory. The flexibility that the hon. Lady has offered the house is sufficient to bring me into the Lobby with her on this occasion, but I suspect that, when we debate the orders that will be laid under the new clause, we may find ourselves on opposite sides.

12.30 am

Mr. Allason: Dog registration will be no panacea. It will not guarantee sensible dog ownership or compliance with the new law, but those criticisms are no reason for the Government to shrug off their responsibilities. I broadly support the Bill—certainly clause 3, which for the first time will give the public the chance to act before a tragedy. Members of the public who are concerned about dangerous animals, or animals that are running loose, will be able to report an owner to magistrates and get a court order. I welcome that. The registration clause will also give wardens an additional power that they do not at present have. That, too, is to be welcomed.

The difficulty lies at the moment of purchase. There must be a disincentive for the irresponsible owner who buys on impulse. We have already heard of people who go to puppy farms or big breeders and demand a pet but within six months are disappointed with it and put their pet out to run stray. Those are the irresponsible owners at whom the new clause is aimed. It is up to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to draft suitable proposals, but the ojbective is to provide a disincentive to irresponsible owners.

I have followed the Government's position on this. Originally, they were quite prepared to support registration in Northern Ireland. Now they say that it has failed. I notice, too, that the Government originally said that they opposed registration in the rest of the United Kingdom. Now they say that they support the principle, but only for very narrow categories.

I urge the House to give full consideration and support to the new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes).

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): In the short time that I have been in the House, I have taken part in several debates on dog registration. During that time, I have had to listen to some desperately poor arguments in opposition to dog registration. It would be difficult to imagine any poorer or more desperate arguments than some of those that I have heard tonight from Conservative Members. One of them argued that because my right hon. Friend the

[Mr. John McAllion]

Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) may have voted against dog registration in the dim and distant past, the House should follow his lead.

It would be difficult to find a more nonsensical argument. I remind Conservative Members that my right hon. Friend has voted against the poll tax, national health service reforms, privatisation, and almost everything else that the Government have introduced, but they have never used that as an argument for following his lead, nor should they do so now because he did or did not happen to oppose dog registration in the past.

The new clause does not lessen the importance of the Bill. It recognises that some breeds of dog are so dangerous that they have to be banned and that some breeds are so dangerous that special measures are required to be taken against them. If the Bill is to be in a fit form to become law, we must encourage a climate of responsible dog ownership. Therefore, it is important to add new clause 1 to the Bill.

Conservative Members have argued that dog registration will not prevent attacks of the kind we have witnessed in recent years, but I believe that the reverse is the case. The absense of a dog registration scheme sends a clear message to everyone living in the United Kingdom that the Government do not care who owns what dog—that anyone can keep any dog in any environment. If ever I heard a recipe for irresponsibility, that is it. The House of Commons ought to be sending the message to the people of this country that we want to encourage responsible dog ownership, that we want dog owners to register their dogs, that we want dog owners to pay for licences for their dogs and to show that they are capable of looking after their dogs in a responsible manner.

The Home Secretary said that only responsible dog owners would comply with the registration scheme, and that some method must be found of making irresponsible dog owners comply with the law. Every Opposition Member agrees with him about that. The Home Secretary said that less than a third of the dogs in that country had been registered under Northern Ireland's registration scheme and the system of compulsory licensing that operates there. However, he failed to tell the House that, throughout the operation of that scheme, only 158 fixed penalties had been served on people who failed to comply with the registration scheme and that only 19 people had been prosecuted for failing to comply with it. If the scheme is not enforced, it is not surprising that it is not successful. What is lacking in Northern Ireland is a willingness to ensure that the registration scheme is effective. Such a scheme could and should be made effective in this country.

At the end of the Second Reading debate, the Minister of State referred to the ineffectiveness of dog registration. She said that a register would simply record that a dog exists. That in itself is worth while. We heard that there may be 7 million, or 7·5 million, dogs in this country, that there may be 10,000 American pit bull terriers and 90,000 to 180,000 rottweilers. The truth is that nobody knows. There is no record of who owns all those dogs. If registration did nothing else, it would at least provide us with a much better idea of the size of the problem. Before trying to tackle a problem, it is worth trying to find out how big the problem is, but that idea is far too simple for the Home Secretary to take on board.

The Home Secretary gave figures to show that a dog registration scheme would be too costly. He said that it would cost £50 million per year—£23 million for the wardens and kennels, £23 million for administration and a further £4·5 million for the initial registration of dogs. I remind the Home Secretary that the absence of a dog registration scheme already costs us more than £50 million. Boarding, finding new homes for and destroying stray dogs already cost this country an estimated £6 million a year, in addition to the costs of road accidents, hospital treatment and injury to livestock. Altogether, the cost to this country of not having a dog registration scheme is £70 million.

The Home Secretary tried to sidestep that point by saying that that represents costs incurred now. Of course it does, but those costs would not need to be incurred if we had a proper registration scheme. Such a scheme would involve computer and enforcement costs, but they would be offset by savings in the costs now incurred as a result of the absence of such a scheme.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, by definition, a large number of strays are unwanted dogs and that the surplus dog population is causing a considerable problem which would not be addressed by registration?

Mr. McAllion: Cannot the hon. Gentleman try to understand that dogs are unwanted because we make it so easy to own them? If we made it difficult for people to buy a dog at Christmas for their children, irresponsible owners might be put off owning one. That is our argument.

One of the last arguments in opposition to a dog registration scheme came from the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), who said that such a scheme might involve the House legislating for right of entry into locked premises. I direct the hon. Gentleman's attention to clause 5(2) of the Bill for which he will be voting today, which gives authority to justices of the peace and sheriffs to issue warrants to allow entry into locked premises in pursuit of dogs which are said to be out of control. The Bill already gives that power, which the hon. Gentleman said would be unacceptable if it were required to make dog registration work. He cannot possibly defend that absurdity.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me that, if someone buys a dog at Christmas and six months later the family decide to get rid of it, they will take the collar off the dog and let it go? That is the straight problem.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman has hit the nail on the head. On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to a dog that was thrown out of a speeding car, simply to get rid of it. There was no collar and tag on the dog to trace the person who had thrown it out of the car. If a chip had been implanted in the back of the dog's neck, the owner could have been traced under a dog registration scheme. Why cannot Conservative Members come to terms with that fact?

This should not be a party political issue, as is clear from the names of the hon. Members who tabled the new clause. I regret that the Government have turned it into an issue of confidence in a Government who are politically weak. That should never have happened. This is a non-party issue, and the country needs hon. Members to

treat it seriously and on its merits—not on the basis of whether they belong to a particular political party. The fact that the Government have made this a party political issue will not be forgotten by people when they vote in the general election.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to address this point. I have been in the Chamber from the beginning of the debate and have not left it at any time.

I oppose new clause 1. Registration is not a panacea for the dog problem, as is recognised by those who advocate it. If a dog attacks a child, it will make no difference if that dog is registered. Many hon. Members referred to the welfare of strays. Sixty per cent. of stray dogs in Northern Ireland are registered. Those in favour of registration are trying to say that a registration scheme will make dog owners totally responsible and that the behaviour of registered dogs will be different from that of unregistered dogs. That is absolute nonsense and the sooner that we recognise that, the better.

A dog registration scheme will not stop the other problem of faeces littering our parks where our children run about and pick up what the dogs have left behind, and nor will such a scheme make dog owners more law-abiding, as has been suggested by those who support the provisions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) suggested, such a scheme would be no more than a canine poll tax, bringing with it a bureaucratic nightmare that would become more and more expensive as time goes on. The essence of a good law is that it is enforceable. The more holes there are in the system, the more difficult it will be to enforce, the more disreputable it will become, and the less and less likely it is to be effective.

12.45 am

The existing law, with its collar and tag and recognition provisions, is satisfactory. If it is properly applied and enforced and backed with the provisions of this Bill, the situation will improve. The provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will come into force in a few months and will strengthen the way in which we can deal with dogs. The only dog registration scheme that has any credibility is one that provides for a dog to be registered at the point of purchase, but even that can fall on its face because of the many breeders who produce dogs but are not shopkeepers or properly registered breeders.

A dog registration scheme will not work. It would be a bureaucratic nightmare. It would be an insult to the responsible dog owners who would pay, yet it would not catch those who would not. That is why I shall vote against it with confidence.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), when he managed to spare the time to be with us, asked what a register would do. Had he stayed long enough, he would have heard his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary say that it would enable the police and others to know exactly where pit bull terriers or other prescribed dangerous dogs lived, and the name of the recorded owner. The Home Secretary has therefore conceded the argument for a dog registration scheme, but he wants it to be narrow in its scope.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and some of his hon. Friends have said that a registration scheme would be a bureaucratic nightmare, but they do not say that about firearms, motor vehicles or television sets, even when they know that compliance will not be 100 per cent. That is because, when the House rules that such things should be registered, we also arm the Home Secretary of the day with enforcement measures.

Many of the attacks on the proposition of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) have been on the grounds of hon. Members' notions about particular dog registration schemes, but that is not what we are talking about. As the German Shepherd Dog League of Great Britain has said, it is possible to have a scheme that does not apply to existing dogs. The league argues that as each puppy is born, it should be registered immediately. In parallel, it should be made an offence to possess entire males unless that is sanctioned under the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973. That is one way of doing it. Over 10 years, the problem could be solved. I hope that the Home Secretary understands that we are discussing the new clause, and not my ideas or anybody else's about what might happen. If the right hon. Gentleman could get that into his head, he might better understand the arguments of his hon. Friend the Member for Drake.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Two policy documents have been produced by the Labour party in favour of dog registration. The authors owe it to the country to explain exactly what dog registration will mean, the level of the fee and whether it would be self-financing or subsidised. Could we have some answers?

Mr. Corbett: I ask the Home Secretary to be patient. I ask him also to get it between his ears that we are discussing new clause 1.

It has been argued that a national dog registration scheme would not stop attacks on children and others, and that is right. No one—not even the Home Secretary—claimed that the firearms legislation could prevent another Hungerford, although it is to be hoped that it has made it less likely. Such arguments about the responsible ownership of firearms under a licensing system also apply to a responsible system of dog ownership.

To put the Home Secretary's question to me in a nutshell, "How much is that doggie in the window?" It has been put to him two or three times, most recently by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), that on a conservative estimate the lack of a national registration scheme costs at least £70 million a year.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Rubbish.

Mr. Corbett: The Foreign Secretary tempts me, but I shall not be diverted because of the time constraint.

As I have said, it is estimated that the lack of a national registration scheme costs about £70 million a year, so we have that money to work with. I give an undertaking on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and myself that when my right hon. and hon. Friends form the next Government we shall produce a specific dog registration scheme, and put a price tag upon it.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The new clause is directed to the control of dogs that are not otherwise regulated, and that is how my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J.

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

Fookes) introduced it. Much has been said about responsible ownership and the introduction of legislation that will control dogs. I remind the Committee, as did my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), of existing legislation. First, we have the Animal Health Act 1982, which provides that everyone who has a dog should cause it to wear a tag that bears the dog's name and that of its owner. If the dog does not wear a tag, the owner is liable for a fine of £2,000. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 provides for a scheme to be introduced next April that will deal, among other things, with the extremely important problem of strays.

With those two pieces of legislation we have provided that all dogs must carry the name and address of their owners. Through local authorities, wardens will have authority to collect strays. Accordingly, strays will no longer be a problem. The same legislation takes care of the fouling of public places and of areas being limited for dogs. It answers the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake for the control of dogs that are not otherwise regulated.

We have heard much about a dog registration scheme, but I have not heard one argument that has convinced me that enforcement would be better through such a scheme than through current legislation. Nothing will make the irresponsible owner licence his dog. Nor is there anything that will prevent a registration scheme being extremely expensive and bureaucratic and from producing harassment and complications that would not be right or proper. I have considerable reservations about the notion of tattooing or chipping dogs so that we can trace their owners. Indeed, some Opposition Members have expressed considerable reservation about such schemes.

The most frightening argument that has been advanced by Opposition Members is that they would like a registration scheme introduced because that would enable them to trace people who had dogs. It seems that they might even go further and say that only those who they think are the right people should own dogs. That is the slippery path down which the Opposition want to lead us. Given some of the frightening views expressed it makes me wonder whether we are listening to the views of those who are dog lovers or dog haters. Some Opposition Members would like to dictate how many dogs people should have, let alone whether they should have a dog, and how much it should cost.

I hope that my hon. Friends have listened carefully to the arguments that have been put. I hope that they will consider carefully the implications of introducing an expensive, difficult and bureaucratic dog registration scheme on top of existing legislation.

Dame Janet Fookes: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has sought to dissuade me from my course of action by citing several reasons, with which I shall deal briefly.

First, my right hon. Friend suggested that the cost of the registration would be great and he offered various figures taken from the LSE research document. The highest figure of £60 million works out at under £10 a dog. I do not believe that that is such a ghastly amount as suggested.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend sought to say that the Bill and existing legislation are adequate to meet the problem, without a dog registration scheme. I hope that I have summarised my right hon. Friend's argument correctly. However, the duty of enforcement will fall largely on the local authorities. It is the environmental health officer, the dog wardens and the Association of District Councils who say that they want and need a dog registration scheme as the mechanism by which to carry out their duties. If I were asked to believe either my right hon. Friends—good and excellent they may be—or those who must carry out that duty on a daily basis, I would believe those who have that daily responsibility.

Anyone would think that the dog registration scheme was some strange scheme that we were pioneering. I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary mentioned certain countries, but he was careful to list those countries that are not notable for being particularly law-abiding in any sense.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Spain?

Dame Janet Fookes: Yes, Spain is one such example. I suggest that he should study Germany, Sweden, Australia and Canada. They all operate effective registration schemes.

If owners are required to register when they acquire a dog and to pay a fee for so doing, they immediately commit an offence if they do not. Those who must enforce the law want that first step of enforcement—dog registration—at their disposal. In that way one does not have to wait for another offence to be committed, such as fouling, fighting or anything else. The registration scheme is a ready-made arrangement upon which dog wardens and the police can rely.

My right hon. Friend also spoke about tags. He will be aware that I have advocated a permanent system of identification. That means that if the collar and tag are lost one is still able to identify the dog. That mechanism, more than anything else, would mean that we would be able to track down irresponsible owners. That would result in more responsibility. A collar and tag is also of great value to those owners who want to look after their dogs as they are much more easily found if they have such identification.

I advocate the clause strongly and I hope that the House will support me.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Whichever way the vote goes, I believe that the House is agreed that we need a climate of responsibility.

One of the greatest problems with registration is that, when someone is assaulted by an animal they know, registration does not help. When someone is bitten by a dog that runs away, registration does not help. It gets away from the point that was well put by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey), who said that there are far too many dogs in urban areas that are not cared for responsibly.

I do not believe that the registration scheme is the answer, but we should have sympathy with the RSPCA. It has to put down thousands of dogs each week. I believe that if owners could think about the end of their dog's life rather than just about its beginning we would have a better climate—with or without registration, which I intend to vote against—for dogs and human beings.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 260, Noes 303.

Division No. 161] **[12.59 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allason, Rupert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irving, Sir Charles
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, Tony
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael J. Martin and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John

Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

DOGS BRED FOR FIGHTING

1.15 am

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 6, at end insert 'any dog of the type known as a rottweiler;'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 30, in page 1, line 9, leave out from 'State' to end of line 11.

No. 3, in page 1, line 10, after 'fighting', insert 'or aggressiveness'.

No. 4, in page 1, line 11, leave out 'that purpose' and insert 'those purposes'.

Mr. Corbett: I should explain to the Minister immediately that this is very much a probing amendment.

Like other hon. Members, we have received representations from the Rottweiler Society, and we have listened carefully to what has been said. None the less, some of our constituents do not immediately understand how the Government can single out pit bull terriers for treatment as a special category when there are—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quickly and quietly?

Mr. Corbett: Thank you, Mr. Walker. I know that the House will be grateful to you.

As I was saying, some of our constituents do not understand why the Government propose to take action, on grounds of dangerousness, against 10,000 pit bull terriers while treating the 100,000 rottweilers in this country differently and, to that extent, at least seemingly judging them less dangerous. As I said earlier, we also have in Britain about 100,000 doberman pinschers and 100,000 Staffordshire terriers—also known as "Staffies", as you, Mr. Walker, will be aware.

On amendment No. 3, I want to ask the Minister on what basis the Government were able to decide that there was a real distinction between dogs that they describe as having been bred for fighting, and dogs such as the rottweiler which arguably—I do not think that anybody can controvert this—were originally bred for their aggressiveness. Fortunately, most of us have only seen on film the part that rottweilers played as guard dogs in Nazi concentration camps, but we are none the less alive to the views of those of our constituents who have raised this matter, especially in relation to rottweilers.

I am not trying to score points off the Minister, but I must add that matters are not helped by the fact that the rottweiler is a registered breed and, to that extent, a very pure breed, and large numbers of the dogs are registered by the Kennel Club. The pit bull terrier cannot be registered in that way because it started life as a cross-breed. Heaven alone knows what 57 varieties of genes are in the species or type known as a pit bull.

Having said that, as I think the Minister of State knows, a number of hon. Members have had some difficulty in going along with the Government in making that distinction in the first place. In all honesty, we are glad that the Government have not followed up what would seem to be the logic of that in the Bill by naming other breeds or species of dogs. It has to be said, and it is certainly being said by large numbers of animal welfare and veterinary organisations, that to proceed on a breed by breed or species by species basis does not fit the bill.

The House was told earlier that about three quarters of all serious attacks on people recorded in the Metropolitan police area last year were not by pit bull terriers—about 90 breeds or species of dogs were responsible for three quarters of recorded serious attacks. I do not know whether the Minister of State can comment on the fact that I am also led to believe that it has not been standard practice for police forces to record the breed or species of dog concerned in a serious attack.

A reminder of the problems associated with this part of the Bill is a letter in *The Veterinary Record* of 1 June 1991 by Mr. J. G. Matthews of New London road, Chelmsford, Essex, whom I take to be a vet, although I must make it immediately clear that I am not advertising on his behalf. His signature appears under the letter, which the House may find instructive:

"Twelve years ago the country was warned that the introduction of the breed would lead to problems in the future but the advice went unheeded and subsequently the breed has become well established in the southern half of the United Kingdom, although it has failed to establish itself in the north and has been on the decline in Scotland.

A series of behavioural studies has shown that although generally docile (they are often seen with young children and babies), they will react irrationally and violently when stressed or backed into corners. It must be remembered that they are essentially a pack animal, responding to strong leadership, but generally acting in the interests of self-preservation."

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): That sounds like the Labour party.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman should wait.

The letter continues:

"The public were particularly shocked by a series of televised fights between members of the breed in November last year which left them licking their wounds in public.

The past 12 years have seen a huge increase in the number of attacks by the breed. These include the savaging of manufacturing industry, vicious assaults on the National Health Service and indeed a tax on every adult member of the community.

Surely, now is the time to respond to the overwhelming demands for action. Experience in other countries has shown that attempts to gag and muzzle members in public will not be effective so the only alternative would appear to be the humane destruction of Conservative members of Parliament."

Perhaps that answers the point made by the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim).

That is a facetious point, but I know that the Minister of State understands it. However, it would be to the benefit of the House and to large numbers of people outside it if she could let us in on the process by which the Home Office formed the opinion that at first—I gather from what was said in the earlier part of the debate that there would be some reluctance all round to add any further breeds or types of this special category—it was sensible and safe simply to put pit bull terriers into this special category and no other types.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am grateful for the chance to add to the brief speech that I made in the previous debate. I shall try not to stray too far out of order.

Amendment No. 5 is a probing amendment on whether rottweilers should be added to the most dangerous category. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Minister will say that clause 1 will work, even though it does not look too good. The problem with going too far and including almost every animal that may have been included in the list of 90 that were recorded as being involved in serious attacks is that it may look good but it will not work. Once one tries to go too far, the system breaks down. It is essential, as in other areas of casualty reduction, to focus on the major problem and, if necessary, to be willing to extend it to other areas.

I know well from my constituency, where the postal delivery service was suspended following many attacks, that the range of dogs involved in attacks can be broad. Our approach must include the protection of people involved in postal deliveries, meter readers, refuse collectors, children and other visitors.

Rottweilers were fashionable in the media two years ago. Even if rottweilers are not included as a clause 1 breed, their owners must pick up the common thread of the previous debate. What matters is not that we have disposed of a dog registration scheme or whether we add rottweilers to clause 1, but whether we can achieve an

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

approach that is not focused on legislative rows and arguments but is a common thread among all hon. Members and animal welfare organisations.

We must recognise that, as well as fighting dogs, there are biting dogs, many of which are kept at home. Although muzzling would not stop a child being bitten in someone's home, it would deal with what one calls the bit-and-run dog.

The major issue is whether we can stop the inexorable rise in the number of dogs and in people's desire for more and more aggressive-looking or aggressive dogs. Ordinary families should not feel that they must have an aggressive dog to deter burglars, would-be burglars or people who may assault them on the streets. We must deal with that problem, and if we do so those who want an animal for a companion may instead have a cat, a newt or a stick insect. That is not a serious suggestion, but there are up to 7 million or 8 million dogs now, whereas 10 or 15 years ago there were 3 million or 4 million. That shows that people have used some of their prosperity or fears to add to the number of dogs in urban areas.

Anyone who proposes to own a dog in an urban area must look at themselves in the mirror and ask how they will deal with the mess. I have watched wheelchair travellers, children and blind and partially sighted people trying to negotiate the mess on our pavements. Dog owners, whether they are lighthouse keepers—people who have a dog on a lead but look out to sea while the dog does its business behind them—or those who push the dog out, should tell wheelchair travellers, partially sighted people or children where their dog's mess will be laid and where their dogs will be left. If we can deal with the issues of aggression, the mess and the number of dogs, I suspect that these debates will have been worth while.

I believe that the Home Office Ministers have done well in introducing the Bill, which is a response to welfare organisations and dog owners. I hope that we shall see speedy progress and I suspect that the rottweiler will not be added to the clause 1 list.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I support the probing amendment. I have spoken to senior dog handlers with Strathclyde police. They have handled dogs all their working lives and, generally, show no fear of large dogs. The information that I have been given is that rottweilers can weigh more than 10 stone. The cause of worry is not only their weight but the bone structure around the jaw and their muscle tissue.

I understand that a professor at Aberdeen university is studying rottweilers. He has come up with some evidence that there is a serious problem in the character of the dogs as they are being bred. I use those words because I came across rottweilers eight or nine years ago before the breed was famous. Most of those dogs were gentle because the owners, realising that they should get a large dog for the security of their homes, wanted a dog that was placid, but which would look the part even if it did no more than bark. Nowadays, the alsatian breeders have got their act together and they are ensuring that the highly nervous strains are not continued in the breed. However, the reverse is the case with the rottweiler. Many breeders seek to get aggressive bitches and aggressive dogs, and breed from them.

1.30 am

Normally when a dog becomes aggressive, or is about to become aggressive, some warning is given, and a growl or some other sign gives a human being a chance to get out of the situation. However, police officers say that rottweilers can go from being docile to being very aggressive within seconds. That is a frightening feature of those dogs.

An alsatian attacking a human being is bad enough, but if a dog that weighs in excess of 10 stone with a lot of power in its jaws gets hold of someone, there are serious problems.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I want to reinforce my hon. Friend's point about the rapid transformation of the behaviour of the dogs. In my own constituency a few weeks ago, a rottweiler attacked a three-year-old boy, Graham Pilkington, and as a result, the boy needed eight stitches in his neck. The circumstances seem to have been as my hon. Friend described. The dog suddenly turned nasty, with almost no warning.

Mr. Martin: We hear such stories all the time. The child was lucky to get away with eight stitches. It could have been worse: the injury to the neck could easily have killed the child.

Dogs, as part of the animal kingdom, can behave aggressively in many ways. A child could get between the dog and its food or between the dog and its litter. Such actions can make a dog become aggressive. However, it does not help if the dog is highly nervous and easily provoked in the first place.

I hope that the Minister will take on board the fact that police officers are becoming concerned that, if rottweilers get out of hand and become aggressive, they are not equipped to handle them. A dog handler in Strathclyde, or anywhere else, would think nothing of trying to control a labrador or any other dog—even an alsatian or a doberman—that gets out of hand. However, they see that the only way in which they could bring a rottweiler under control would be for one officer. dressed in so much padding that he would look ridiculous and like a Michelin man, to allow himself to be attacked in the hope that a veterinarian would be on hand with a tranquiliser.

I do not know whether the Minister of State can confirm this, but I understand that vets carry an antidote to the tranquilisers because they have only five minutes in which to administer an antidote if they scratch themselves with the drug. What a society we live in when we must go to those ridiculous lengths to control a certain breed. If what I have described is true, should not the Minister consider categorising rottweilers in the same way as pit bull terriers?

Mr. Cryer: As the Government have, with smirks on their faces, defeated dog registration, we must use the provisions in the Bill. Certain dogs will be banned and amendment No. 5 seeks to include rottweilers in that list. The Secretary of State can make exemptions and impose those conditions that he considers prudent. Dogs may be kept, but there would have to be a form of registration and the imposition of standards. In general, a dog registration scheme would have achieved that.

What are the Government going to do about the dogs which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) described as very powerful? On 7 May, five-year-old Michael Parkinson was savaged by

two rottweilers near his Bradford home. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) said that, in a similar accident, a young child required eight stitches in its neck. Five-year-old Michael Parkinson required 80 stitches. On 15 May, Pat Lord, who is 39, underwent microsurgery after her right arm was chewed to the bone and broken by her rottweiler. That adult and child suffered serious injuries which only by a fluke did not result in death. However, deaths will occur sooner or later, because the dogs that we are considering are bought for their power and potential viciousness.

People buy those dogs because of the rise in crime. They are bought from unscrupulous dealers who raise them in appalling confined conditions. The dogs are not trained and they are bought by people who want them as symbols of protection. They also do not train them and occasionally those dogs turn either on their owners or on casual visitors or people who call for specific purposes, such as milkmen, postmen, social workers or nurses.

I remind the Minister of State that I had an Adjournment debate shortly before the Whitsun recess in which I described how a headmaster at a school in my constituency took a small 10-year-old boy home from school. He did that as an act of kindness because the boy was not feeling well. When they arrived at the house, a rottweiler broke loose, knocked the headmaster to the ground, broke his arm and savaged him so badly that he was off work for three months. That is what happened to a mature adult who was helping a small child.

The family concerned were extremely irresponsible. As the dog was put down, no prosecution was brought. The following day the family bought a doberman as a replacement for the rottweiler, to accompany their other two rottweilers. Fortunately, the family have now disappeared from the area. The woman ran two massage parlours and the husband had no apparent source of income. Clearly, they were not the most responsible family one could bring to mind, but the Bill does not touch them. I am concerned that such people create difficulties.

Terry Singh, the head dog warden in Bradford, does a good job. There are only half a dozen dog wardens in Bradford—with a population of 500,000 people and an area between 20 and 40 miles across—and they are greatly concerned about dogs such as rottweilers. Presumably the Minister of State will say that, under clause 3(4), an order can be made under section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871 to keep dogs under control. Unfortunately, such action is always retrospective—after an accident has occurred. I understand that the Bradford dog warden scheme is among the best in the country. Indeed, some local authorities do not operate dog warden schemes at all. Dog wardens do not want to react to dog attacks or stray dogs that threaten adults or children—they want to be able to educate and encourage owners in the proper conduct of the ownership of their dogs.

I hope that the amendment is at least accepted in the spirit that, even if it has one or two flaws, the Government will consider something similar for inclusion in the other place and include potentially dangerous dogs such as doberman pinchers and alsations. As the Minister of State knows, I have read a list of accidents that have occurred over the past few months. The only one in which a death occurred involved an alsation. The male owner was savaged to death while his wife tried vainly to rescue him from the savage onslaught of their previously pet dog.

Dangerous dogs are of concern, particularly in urban areas. We appreciate that the Government have taken some action, but the problem still remains because the Bill does not address the wider problem. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) pointed out, 25 per cent. of major accidents in the past 12 months in London necessitating hospitalisation of the victims were committed by American pit bull terriers. That means that 75 per cent. were not, and the bill does not touch that 75 per cent. The amendment is probing the Minister of State to find out what the Government intend to do. I certainly look forward to hearing her comments.

Mr. McAllion: I shall also do a spot of probing in respect of the Government's attitude to rottweilers. The Bill singles out and bans only fighting breeds. The Home Secretary justified that course of action because the threat of fighting dogs presented a different degree of seriousness from other breeds of dog. The Minister of State knows that rottweilers are capable of attacks of unparalleled ferocity. She knows also that rottweilers are very unpredictable. The two dogs that killed my constituent were the same dogs as she had taken out on every day of her holiday and had previously posed no threat to her. In those circumstances, no one would have had any reason to assume that the dogs posed any threat to the girl. No one knows why the dogs suddenly turned and killed.

Although I accept that rottweilers are not bred like fighting dogs to kill and that that is not part of their nature, they still present an awesome threat. Is it the home Secretary's intention to include rottweilers in the measures concerning other especially dangerous dogs? If that is his intention, is he fully satisfied that the only restriction that should be placed upon them is that they should be kept on a leash and muzzled in public? In an article in *Dog World*, the rottweiler breeder Mary MacPhail stressed the need to socialise and train rottweilers, to enable them to fit into society:

> "Breeders must realise that they have a special responsibility to screen rigorously in order to ensure the proper placement of puppies in homes with owners who are able to understand their character and who have the time and inclination to train and exercise them."

The Bill contains no provision that would enable rottweiler owners to be properly screened. The Rottweiler Society will, I am sure, do all that is within its power to ensure that that happens, but there are back-street breeders who will sell those dogs to almost anyone. I want to know what the Government intend to do about that problem.

1.45 am

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said that these were probing amendments. His first point related to the definition of fighting dogs in clause 1. He well knows that the purpose of clause 1 is to prohibit dogs that are bred specifically for fighting. Both he and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that they were not pressing for rottweilers and other dogs to be included at this stage in the definition of dogs bred for fighting. Indeed, they could not be, because they are not bred for that purpose. The Government do not consider that prohibiting the ownership of rottweilers can be justified, because they are not fighting dogs. Therefore, such a prohibition should not apply to them.

[Mrs. Rumbold]

I take note of what both the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) have said. Provision is made, in exceptional circumstances, for the Secretary of State to use his reserve powers in clause 2 to impose both muzzling and leashing conditions on all dogs of any type, if he considers that that type of dog could be a serious danger to the public. It is important to note that the provisions of clause 2 apply to a whole breed.

Moreover, clause 3(4) enables the courts to declare that an order under section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871 could be made where a dog is shown to have caused injury to a person and to specify the measures to be taken for keeping the dog under proper control, whether by muzzling, or by keeping it on a lead, or by excluding it from specified places, or otherwise. May I point out to the hon. Member for Bradford, South that it is possible for people to make such an application before there is an attack? If people are concerned about a neighbour's dog—believing that it might be dangerous—they can apply, under subsection (4), for assistance.

The hon. Member for Erdington also asked me about dogs that are bred not specifically for fighting but because they have aggressive tendencies. A few interesting contributions have been made, including that of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) who is particularly concerned about the way in which some dogs are bred. If that becomes a problem in the case of dogs other than American pit bull terriers, whose immense shoulder and jaw strength can cause immense harm to human beings and other dogs, the Home Secretary will be able to implement the provisions of clause 2 and order that such a breed should be muzzled and kept on a leash in public at all times.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Is the right hon. Lady saying that hon. Members and members of the general public will have to quote cases showing a pattern of these dogs attacking people? It appears from the evidence of muscle structure and capability that there are more placid and less dangerous creatures locked up in zoos, yet the Home Secretary will allow these dogs to walk the face of the earth until the public can prove they are becoming a danger.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is important to deal with aggressive dogs case by case, or we would automatically have to look at rottweilers as a complete breed. Rather than having a draconian provision applying to a substantial number of dogs, there should be a provision that affects only a small number of dogs specifically kept at a particular place, not rottweilers across the country. If the hon. Gentleman would like to pursue this matter and to send us further evidence, we would certainly consider it.

Mr. McAllion: I should like to be clear about the Government's intention. The Minister says that they will use the clause 2 powers to categorise the entire rottweiler breed as a specially dangerous breed. Is that correct?

Mrs. Rumbold: There would have to be specific reasons that would cause the Home Secretary to use his reserve powers under clause 2 and impose muzzling and leashing conditions on all dogs of any type if he considered that they presented a danger to the public. I am not saying exactly what the hon. Gentleman says; I am saying that that would come about, with care, only in exceptional circumstances, after evidence, consultation and the approval of both Houses of Parliament. There would have to be further debate on the matter, but the provision exists. If everyone considers that there is sufficient cause for alarm, the Home Secretary can use that power. It will enable him to impose a specified restriction on dogs deemed to present a serious danger to the public. It is an important measure.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): We are talking about breeds other than the pit bull terrier—dobermans, rottweilers and perhaps alsatians. It has been pointed out several times that all those breeds have track records of being dangerous dogs and doing a great deal of damage. Although it would perhaps be draconian to undertake the suggested measures, they would involve only leashes, which the owners already possess, and muzzles, which are not expensive. That would be a small price to pay for the safety of all those people who are in danger.

Mauling is not the only issue. I believe that many people are afraid of using public places, such as beaches, because they see a rottweiler or alsatian being exercised there. It may be draconian to suggest that all these breeds should be included in the legislation. Leashes and muzzles are not expensive for owners, although they might slightly dent the macho image.

Mrs. Rumbold: Indeed. I do not disagree with my hon. Friend's comments. A few days ago, a lady came to see me to discuss controlling alsatians. She had an alsatian which had not one but two muzzles on it. She proceeded to take them off as soon as she got into my office, but that is another matter. The dog was extremely well behaved and, I am happy to say, caused no concern either to me or to its owner.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) said, society has an unfortunate image, in that the dogs that we are concerned about have been purchased by a small minority of people for the purpose of giving them the image of people who require extra protection or who are aggressive. Any society that contains people who feel that they need to own dogs that are aggressive in both looks and nature is itself slightly questionable.

From April 1992, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, about which my hon. Friend spoke during the registration of dogs debate, will provide an adequate solution to some of these problems. It will be administered by local councils and the London boroughs and their dog wardens, and will ensure that the environment generally is much cleaner and that stray dogs are no longer allowed to roam. Some of the problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham referred will therefore be taken care of. However, the answer to the problem of controlling aggressive dogs is contained in other provisions in the Bill, such as the stiff penalties that will be introduced for owners who do not properly control their dogs.

We do not believe that there is a case at present for imposing blanket controls on any breed or for the drastic step of banning breeds in the way in which we shall prohibit the ownership of pit bull terriers. Such a ban would involve the destruction of a tremendous number of large dogs, many of which have not caused any harm. Clause 1 will protect the public against fighting dogs, while

the other clauses will protect dogs that might be considered aggressive, but only a few of which are likely to cause harm.

Mr. Corbett: Although I shall not flog the point, this is one of the areas on which we could have had a good deal more discussion if we had had a proper Committee stage. We are in our present dilemma because the Government have chosen to make a distinction between dogs t' are bred for fighting and other dogs tnat can, on occasions, be dangerous although they are not bred specifically for fighting.

Even at this late stage, and before the Bill goes to another place, perhaps the Minister will consider that there is a second category, including rottweilers, alsatians and dobermans, for which we could consider establishing some test of competence for owners. I know that there will be objections to the idea, but we lay down similar tests before we allow people to drive cars and we make an assessment of competence before people can get anywhere near having a shotgun licence or a firearms certificate.

I understand that it sounds awfully bureaucratic, but if, as I am sure we all accept, our real business is to encourage more responsible dog ownership, there should be the expectation that, irrespective of the breed of dog, the owner is competent to make the trained dog obey a few simple commands such as "sit", "heel" and "go". There could, for example, be a competence certificate, which could be part of third-party insurance cover. I understand that some breed societies run such schemes and that they can attest to the competence of registered owners. In such circumstances insurance companies might care to offer a discount.

Some of us have received representations from those who are responsible for the training and provision of guide dogs for the blind, and we are reminded of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). Many alsatians or German shepherds, as well as labradors, are used to assist those who are blind the better to get around. If alsatians or German shepherds were added to the specially dangerous list, it would make it virtually impossible for such dogs to be used to assist the blind. If the attachment were to be made, the entire breed would be stigmatised.

I am sure that the Minister of State will understand that because of the hour at which the debate is taking place what the Home Secretary said about the coming into effect of some important sections of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 next year may not have sunk home as well as it might have done had our exchanges been taking place at 3 pm, for example, rather than 2 am.

2 am

It is no part of my brief to try to persuade my right hon. and hon. Friends of the importance of what the Minister of State was saying, but I think that she was right to draw attention to clause 3(4), which allows orders to be made against dogs before they have caused injury. Many of us have received representations, especially over the weekend, from those who feel that they are in danger, irrespective of the breed of dog that is involved. The individual thinks, "There's that great dog down there and one of these days he will attack my kids."

There are dogs that are not under proper control, which have had inadequate training and are not regularly and properly exercised. Such dogs can be in the vicinity of primary schools, old people's day centres and centres for the disabled, and their presence can terrify. In addition, there is the daily terror of many thousands of those who are responsible for delivering our mail. They know damn well that the moment that they put their hand on the gate of No. 53, as I think the Home Secretary said, the dog will go bananas. It may have been doing it for years, and perhaps to that extent the postman has become used to the experience. At the back of his mind, however, is the feeling that, as sure as God made little chickens, one of these days someone will have forgotten to put the bolt on the side gate and the brute will get out.

I say especially to my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that the provision in clause 3 that is designed to enable people to go to the courts before a dog has had what used to be referred to as his one bite, to seek to get the animal under proper control, is an important one. I hope that the Minister of State will think about these matters before the Bill arrives in another place. In the expectation that she will do that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I beg to move amendment No. 6, in clause 1, page 1, line 20, after 'lead', insert—

'( ) allow such a dog of which he is the owner to be kept in insecure conditions in and around the place where the owner is residing;'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 9, in clause 3, page 3, line 16, after 'place', insert

'or in any other place where it has, or is likely to become, a danger to a member of the public'.

No. 14, in clause 8, page 6, line 30, after 'enclosed', insert

', and including the common parts of any building in multiple occupation'.

No. 26, in clause 8, page 6, line 31, at end insert

'and any land adjoining such a place which is not securely fenced off from that place'.

Mr. Randall: The amendment is designed to ensure that we protect the public in the best possible way. Clause 1(2) provides:

"No person . . . allow such a dog of which he is the owner in a public place without being muzzled and kept on a lead".

We support the use of muzzles and leads, but amendment No. 6 goes further than that by taking into account the place where the animal is kept. The amendment would add to clause 1(2) and forbid a person to

"allow such a dog of which he is the owner to be kept in insecure conditions in and around the place where the owner is residing".

The Bill proposes the use of muzzles and leads as an attempt to ensure that the public is protected when a dog is in a public place accompanied by its owner, but what happens when that dog is allowed out of the home unintentionally and is therefore unmuzzled and not on a lead? The consequences are serious if a dog bred for fighting is wandering the streets on its own. We should ensure that the home in which the dog is kept is secure. I believe that amendment No.6 is reasonable and sensible and I hope that it has the support of the Minister and the Committee.

[Mr. Randall]

What happens if a dog escapes from its home? Does the Minister agree that "insecure conditions" could threaten the safety of the public?

Amendment No.9 refers to clause 3, which relates to keeping dogs under control. Clause 3(1) states:

"If a dog is dangerously out of control in a public place . . . the owner"—

or the person responsible for it—

"is guilty of an offence".

Questions have already been asked on Second Reading about the definition of a public place. Amendment No.9 refers to "any other place" where the dog is a danger to any member of the public.

My constituency has many blocks of flats with security systems and a limited number of entrances. The aim of such security is to make such blocks private places so as to protect the residents. Some of the larger blocks have security guards and use special locking devices. My hon. Friends and I are concerned about the definition of "public place" in clause 3. What does the Minister mean by that?

In Hull, a person got into the ground floor of one of the blocks. Someone on one of the upper floors threatened that person by saying, "Unless you get out of here I'll set my dog on you." In those circumstances, there is a threat to a person's safety and security, yet the clause is restrictive as it uses the term "public place". Will the Minister define exactly "public place" and tell us whether the clause will apply to blocks of flats with such non-public places or whether there will be a loophole that could cause problems for those living in or visiting those areas?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I wish briefly to refer to amendment No. 26. I tabled the amendment to probe what is meant by the term "public place". I read the notes on clauses after I had tabled the amendment, and my understanding is that "public place" is defined in law rather wider than it would appear to be in common-sense English.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that I am a keen walker and that I often speak on behalf of ramblers. I do not do so on this occasion, but I am conscious that many people enjoy walking. In recent years, some of them have experienced considerable problems on public footpaths. Such problems do not generally occur when people walk past traditional farms, because although farm dogs make a great deal of noise, if they are difficult they are usually chained. If they are running free, they usually behave themselves.

On the urban fringes, people are increasingly buying properties in the countryside. Footpaths run past those dwellings, and their owners often keep quite substantial dogs that, on many occasions, are not chained. I want to know whether "public place" will cover a right of way, and if so, how much of it will be covered. Will it be just the 2 ft or 3 ft of the path, or will it be any area close to the right of way that may have a dog on it, which would discourage people from using the footpath? I hope that the Minister can clarify that point.

What will be the responsibilities of people who take dogs with them when they walk on a public right of way? As I understand the existing legislation, if someone is on a public footpath he has a responsibility to have the dog under close control. That is difficult to define. My experience is that a large number of people who use footpaths take dogs with them, but in no way could they be said to be under close control. The dogs are often allowed to bound ahead.

Twice recently, while walking on a footpath, I have been confronted by substantial dogs. They have run up to me and jumped up. In fact, once they had jumped up they turned out to be very friendly dogs. I do not like having a dog jump up at me, whether or not it is friendly. It was a great relief to discover that they were friendly. I do not think that my walk should be spoilt by someone's dog jumping up at me, whether or not it is friendly. The owners are often a long way behind, and in no position to stop their dogs behaving in that way.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that if someone is on a public footpath he has a duty to keep the dog at heel, and not allow it to bound ahead and upset other people who are walking on the footpath or to disturb livestock. Sheep and cattle are constantly being stopped from grazing because of the number of people on footpaths with dogs.

I do not want to stop people walking dogs on public footpaths in the countryside; I hope, however, that the Minister will make it clear that such people are responsible for keeping their dogs under close control—which means that they have control of the dogs and the dogs are close to them. Public places must include public footpaths and rights of way; people should have reasonable space, and should not be expected to walk past a large dog that may look as though it may be dangerous.

2.15 am

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I have been trying to count the number of multi-storey dwellings that my constituency contains. Because of the lateness of the hour it has become more and more difficult, but I hope that hon. Members will take my word for it when I tell them that there are more than 28. The Red Roads flats, for instance, are 32 storeys high. Some of those buildings are very pleasant to live in; some people prefer to live in them, because of the security and the ease with which they can be heated and decorated. One block—the Carron scheme block—is in particularly high demand.

I tabled amendment No. 14 because it would worry me if some barrack-room lawyer came along and said, "I know that the pavement is a public place, but it is a different matter once I have gained access to the secured entrance"—or hallway—"of my multi-storey flat, which is a communal part of the property. I pay a rent; I am a tenant. My dog can be free to roam there, if I wish it to." That would put other tenants in danger—along with tradesmen, milkmen, postmen and, indeed, Members of Parliament, who are surely entitled to visit buildings that are, say, 22 storeys high, with four families on each landing, and to regard the common entrances, stairways and lifts as places to which access should be free.

It has been suggested that tenants of some multi-storey flats are so lazy that, when their dogs need to relieve themselves, they show the dogs to the lift and press the gound-floor button, whereupon the dogs take care of everything else. That suggests that the dogs are more intelligent than the tenants. I think that some people who own "dangerous breeds" are not quite the full shilling: they are not right in the head. After all, no intelligence test is involved in dog ownership. Yet we allow those people to own some of the most dangerous creatures known to man.

I know that the Bill cannot cover everything, but I hope that the Minister can reassure us that stupid tenants who happen to be irresponsible dog owners will not be a liability to others, or to members of the public. I include deck-access blocks here. Some people used to say—I hope that I shall not offend the women's section of the Labour party——

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Never.

Mr. Martin: There is only one member of that section present anyway.

Some people say that, if only women designed buildings, we would have better designs. One of the worst-designed buildings in my constituency, the Balgrayhill deck access block, was designed by a woman architect. Needless to say, she does not live in the building. My concern is that two storeys up there is a deck access. The architect's idea was that it would serve as the pavement, where neighbours could chat to one another, in the style of the other tenement communities that existed before Glasgow's slums were pulled down. It was a great idea, but the alsatians, rottweilers and pit bull terriers are allowed to roam at their leisure. I hope that the Minister will confirm that the provision to control dogs in public places will cover stairways, lifts, and the decks of deck access buildings.

Glasgow and Edinburgh must have more tenemental property than anywhere in Britain. Some of them are modelled on the kind of tenements that are seen in Paris. They are lovely places in which to live, but if I encountered an aggressive dog, I would rather do so in the street than in the confined entrance to a multi-storey block of flats or tenement. In that situation, I could only turn my back on the dog and run—and if one is three stone overweight, one might not be able to outrun the dog.

Mention was made of guide dogs for the blind, and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) was present in the Chamber with his beautiful dog only an hour or two ago. I learned of a case in which a blind tenant in one 32-storey block took his guide dog into the lift, not realising that a pit bull terrier was already in it. Most dogs are territorial, and even those that do not have aggression bred into them will, in certain circumstances, protect what they regard as their territory. In that case, the pit bull terrier had a go at the guide dog.

Imagine what a terrifying experience it would be to find oneself in a lift that broke down, if one was sharing it with a dog—even one under the control of its owner. One might be trapped in that lift, in pitch black, for two hours or more—and in those circumstances, the dog could grow frightened, and that fear might make it become aggressive. I have described the sort of situations that tenants throughout the country confront every day, so including stairways, lifts and decks in the definition of a public place would help.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I seek clarification as to the difference between a public place and a private place, in the context of a constituency example. I refer to a case in which access to two houses is via a private path that runs alongside another property's back garden, in which is kept a particularly ferocious alsatian. That animal puts everyone who uses that access in fear of their lives, to the extent that the postman, milkman, and others who would otherwise deliver services to the two properties in question refuse to use the path.

The owners have sought every remedy available to them, but have drawn a blank under all the legislation that they have examined. However, clause 3(4) of the Bill clarifies the meaning of section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871. I understand that that clause would have the same effect as the amendments before us in that it would provide a remedy in the case that I have cited. Clause 3(4) clarifies the scope of section 2 of the 1871 Act, and the application of that Act is not confined to a public place. I shall be grateful if the Minister can confirm that my understanding is correct.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first point raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) concerned clause 1(2)(d) and the question whether a dog should be secure and what would happen if it got out and became a stray. I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that, under clause 1(2)(e) a person may not

"abandon such a dog of which he is the owner or, being the owner or for the time being in charge of such dog, allow it to stray".

That provision will bite, because it requires that no person shall allow his prohibited dog to stray.

Any owner who kept his dog in insecure conditions would certainly fall foul of the provision, and we believe that it would act as a powerful incentive to those who wanted to hold on to their dogs to ensure that they were, indeed, securely kept. Someone who keeps a dog designated a dangerous dog under the Bill—for example, a pit bull terrier—will already have accepted that a number of constraints will apply in respect of that dog, one of which is specified in clause 1(2)(e).

Moreover, we believe that, if a dog were kept in what appeared to be insecure conditions, clause 3(4) would bite. That provision would ensure that a neighbour or anyone else who knew that someone was the owner of a pit bull terrier which, in his view, was not securely contained, could request a court order specifying that the dog should be brought under control. It will be within the court's power to order that the dog should be kept in secure conditions. I hope that that will reassure the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West that the problem is already dealt with under clause 1(2)(e).

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) voiced their concern about public ways and walkways. I have sympathy with the intention behind the amendments, which I understand to be to ensure the protection of members of the public entering private property on lawful business—for example, postmen, of whom we have talked before.

The proposals are also aimed to ensure that the provisions of clause 3, dealing with dogs that are dangerously out of control, apply to walkways and other public places in blocks of flats such as those to which the hon. Member for Springburn has referred. I understand that point, because I, too, have blocks of flats in my constituency where such difficulties could arise. That is why we took the matter into account when drafting the Bill, and we believe that we have covered it fully in the provisions.

The Dogs Act 1871, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester referred, is strengthened and clarified by clause 3(4), which gives any person the right to make a complaint about any dog in any place, and for the court, on upholding the complaint, to specify measures to keep the dog under proper control, including the areas

[Mrs. Rumbold]

where it is not allowed to go. In other words, the court can say, "That dog must not be allowed on that particular walkway." That gives the postmen and the worried neighbour the possibility of ensuring that a dog is no longer allowed to be in an area where it has previously caused alarm or even injury.

Our definition of a public place in clause 8(2) is broader than that in previous related legislation; it also includes areas to which the public have access. That extends the definition to many areas sometimes thought of as private property, such as shopping precincts and common areas in blocks of flats. I think that the extended pathway that the hon. Member for Springburn was talking about when he mentioned the unfortunate lady architect who designed the block in question, is covered in that clause. Therefore, it would be unnecessary to agree to his amendment, because it is already taken care of.

May I say a final word about amendment No. 9 and the extension of dangerous dog provisions to all places. I have said previously that we do not need this additional provision because of the action that members of the public will be able to take under the Dogs Act 1871. Furthermore, section 16 of the Public Order Act 1986 gives extra protection because it gives members of the public an implied right to enter private property on lawful business without let or hindrance.

2.30 am

The lawful business aspect raises the query whether, under this amendment, it would be possible for a burglar to bring an action against an owner whose dog had been dangerously out of control when the burglar broke in. I am sure that the hon. Member would agree that that would be neither sensible nor fair. However, it serves to illustrate just how difficult it is to draft reasonable provisions regarding private property. I hope that hon. Members will agree that we have given considerable thought to how best to define public places and that we have tried to come up with a working definition.

As regards the issue mentioned by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), the definition of a public place in the Bill is much wider than that contained in the Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, which is confined to streets and lands controlled by a local authority. The definition was deliberately extended to include some privately owned land and the Bill specifically states that places to which the public have access are covered by the phrase. Therefore, I think that I can assure him that public footpaths will certainly be included.

In his amendment the hon. Gentleman adds to public place land which adjoins it but is "not securely fenced off" from it. The word "securely" seems to open the definition very wide. If a dog can get into a garden or a field it could be argued that that alone would show that the fence was not secure. I do not think that that was quite what the hon. Member meant. He was perhaps talking about catching a dog which strays on to a privately owned field or open field and may cause some damage to farm animals. He may have been worried about dogs worrying sheep.

Public footpaths are public places within this Bill. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish wanted to know what would happen about close control of dogs. The intention is that dogs should be on a lead, so I trust that in future when he walks across the country on public footpaths and he meets dogs they will be on a lead.

With those comments I hope that I have answered the questions put by Opposition Members and that they will not feel the need to press their amendments.

Mr. Randall: The Minister's comments about clause 1(2)(e) worry me a little. She said quite clearly that the courts might have to interpret the end of that clause, which talks about the owner allowing the dog to stray, because if a dog got out of the house in which it was kept against the will of the owner or the person responsible for it, one could argue that that person was not intentionally allowing the dog to stray.

The way in which clause 1(2)(e) is phrased leaves matters a little open and suggests that the person passively let the dog out to have a run on its own. That is how it could be interpreted, but perhaps the matter will be reconsidered in another place. We shall not divide the Committee. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. McAllion: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 1, line 22, at end insert—

'(f) be in charge of such a dog who is under 18 years of age.'.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 19, in page 1, line 23, at end insert—

'(g) be allowed to own a dog to which this section applies who has been convicted of offences involving violence or drug-related offences.'.

No. 21, in clause 2, page 2, line 44, leave out 'and (e)' and insert '(e) and (f)'.

No. 22, in clause 2, page 2, line 44, after '(e)', insert 'and (g)'.

Mr. McAllion: These are, in effect, probing amendments that seek to establish the Government's position.

On Second Reading, a number of hon. Members referred to the problem of minors being in charge of fighting dogs or dangerous breeds of dogs. Amendment No. 18 would make it illegal for anyone under 18 to be in charge of such a dog.

We believe that there is an overwhelming case to pass an amendment that would protect minors in terms of their being allowed to be in charge of such dogs in public. The Minister will remember that when my constituent was killed, she and her friend were in charge of two rottweilers. Both were only 11 years old and simply could not cope with the violence of the attack. Yet the owner had done nothing illegal in allowing those youngsters to be in charge of the dogs in public. Sadly, if the Bill is enacted, the owner would still be doing nothing illegal in allowing two 11-year-olds to be in charge of them.

I recently received a bulletin from a group in the United States called Citizens United to Revitalise Education, which made out the case for banning pit bull terriers. It listed a series of attacks by those dogs between 1979 and 1990. It did not claim to be a comprehensive list because it contained only attacks of which the organisation was aware. The attacks resulted in 58 people being killed, 41 of whom were children or minors. Of the 45 other serious attacks, 21 were on children or minors. That shows that

children or minors are particularly vulnerable to attacks by such dogs and are far less likely to survive than an adult or someone over 18.

We believe that there is a clear responsibility on the Government to introduce measures to prevent minors from being placed in positions where they are vulnerable to such attacks.

Amendment No. 18 proposes that no one under 18 should be allowed to be in charge of such dogs. It is a probing amendment and 18 may not be the appropriate age below which to define a minor, but we say that there must be an appropriate age.

The Bill creates the offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place and defines such an offence as leaving the dog in charge of a person who could not reasonably be believed to be a fit and proper person to be in charge of the dog. It is obvious that any owner who allowed a five, six or seven-year-old to be in charge of a dangerous dog in public would be guilty of such an offence, but it is not so obvious that he would be guilty of the offence if the person in charge of the dog were aged between 11 and 14. The Government must define the age at which it would be an offence for any owner to allow a minor to be in charge of powerful dogs in public. I hope that the Minister will tell us the Government's thinking on the problem.

The second amendment would make it illegal for anyone who has been convicted of violent or drug-related offences to own dogs covered by the Bill. My concern does not date only from the present. In May 1989, I asked the then Home Secretary whether he had had

"discussions with chief officers of police concerning the increasing use of dogs to protect premises subject to police raids; and if he has any plans to introduce measures to assist police in overcoming this problem."

He told me that he had had no discussions with chief officers and that he had

"no plans to introduce further measures to control guard dogs."—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. *757-58*.]

I understand that the present Home Secretary has had discussions with the Police Federation and with other representatives of police officers. However, there is no evidence in the Bill that he is doing anything to try to deal with the problem.

On Second Reading, we heard from the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), the spokesman for the Police Federation, who warned of increasing attacks on the police. He spoke of the support from the police for tougher measures against dangerous dogs. He referred to a study that had been carried out in the Metropolitan police area over six months and which had listed 237 attacks by ferocious dogs. He especially mentioned two attacks. In one, a large group of youths who had 10 pit bull terriers with them threatened the police in Kennington park. In another, there was growing evidence that drug dealers were using fighting dogs and dangerous breeds of dog as an offensive weapon to prevent police raids against their premises. He also referred to the position in America. American police are being forced to use sledgehammers to break down doors and to shoot on sight any dogs that may be behind the doors because of that problem. The bulletin to which I referred earlier lists a number of cases in which youngsters were killed by dogs that were being kept for the purpose of protecting drug dealers and which had got out of control.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and I suggest that there are two serious problems—the question of minors being allowed to be in charge of dangerous dogs in public and the criminal use to which such dogs are being put. Neither the Minister nor the Bill does anything about those problems. I am interested to hear what the Minister has to say about the Government's intentions on the matter.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I will speak briefly in support of what my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) has said. The document that has been dispatched from America, to which my hon. Friend referred, makes harrowing reading. I suggest that anyone who has not read it does so to see recorded some of the incidents regarding pit bull terriers in particular. There is no doubt that pit bull terriers have been used for some time—certainly since 1987—to safeguard the activities of those involved with narcotics.

I will briefly explain to the House what happened so that it can understand, if it does not already, the savagery of those dogs and the difficulties that law enforcement officers have in America. They are the same difficulties that law enforcement officers could have here in going about their lawful duty, such as attempting to break into a house in which, it has been suggested, quantities of drugs are being used for illegal purposes.

John Ford, the mayor of Tuskegee, was jogging up a wooded hill when he was attacked in October 1988 by two pit bull terriers. He managed ultimately to climb up a tree and he tried to keep the dogs off by clubbing them with a piece of the tree. His cries for help were eventually heard by someone who shot one of the animals dead with a ·357 Magnum and wounded the other, which was then finished off by Ford himself when he got down from the tree. He had to go to hospital for severe leg injuries which included 23 puncture wounds. The animals had lived in the wild for two months after escaping from a drug dealer who had used them as guard dogs. That was a growing problem in the state.

A police officer called Bert Ricassa was attacked by a pit bull terrier as he tried to arrest a narcotics suspect in 1987. He drew his service revolver and shot the animal four times at point blank range as it bit his thigh. However, another officer had to club the dying animal on the head and then had to use his night-stick to pry its jaws open. Ricassa was bitten four times and required 400 stitches. That happened in Baltimore.

I have a catalogue of more than 100 cases of attacks by pit bull terriers. When we consider that it was almost impossible to free the victims from the dogs and how on one occasion a service revolver pumped four shots into a dog at point-blank range, but the dog would not release its grip on the officer, it is clear why there had to be legislation against pit bull terriers.

2.45 am

Hon. Members are concerned that pit bull terriers will be with us for some time to come. The Bill will allow those owners who have responsibly registered their dogs and have certificates proving that their dogs have been neutered to keep their dogs. In fact, they may keep them for another 12 or 15 years.

Criminals who have been convicted of crimes of violence or drugs-related offences should not have the right to keep such dogs as guard dogs. It is not a matter of keeping irresponsible animals; it is more a matter of irresponsible owners keeping those vicious animals as

protection from police raids on their premises. We should legislate to ensure that no one can keep a dog of the kind about which we are concerned for that purpose—what I would describe as an unlawful purpose.

I hope that the Secretary of State has considered with the police authorities what kind of protection he can offer to our police officers. I do not think that they should be armed with .375 Magnums so that they can shoot their way into the homes of people they suspect of drugs-related offences. However, we cannot have a situation where, even after the police have broken down a door and gained access, they are confronted if not by several pit bull terriers, at least by dogs that have been trained specifically to attack anyone entering the premises. We must consider those issues seriously and I look forward to hearing the Minister of State's reply.

With regard to minors looking after what could be claimed to be dangerous dogs, the amendment is a probing one. A 16-year-old may be perfectly capable of looking after a dog, whether or not it is a dangerous breed. However, we must consider children who take those dogs out, particularly if those dogs are pit bull terriers.

The difficulty with the pit bull terrier is that it can and does attack without warning. There are hundreds of recorded cases of such attacks in the United States. It has been reported that the animal usually does not bark, growl, bare its teeth or make a threatening display. Its neck hairs do not stand on end as is the case with other breeds. It does not crouch for a spring. It simply runs silently at its victim. Unlike any other breed, a pit bull has been bred for that purpose. It knows submission signals that show that its opponent has had enough and it will continue the fight to the death. We cannot allow a minor to be in charge of such a dog because the consequences if it should escape may be horrendous. Before we record the kind of cases that occur in America—something that none of us would want to see here—legislation must be in force to ensure that such things do not happen.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I support the amendment. My information is that, in the Greater Manchester area, some people who are involved in drugs are now keeping such dogs partly to deter police raids, partly to deter rival drug dealers and, in some cases, to keep control over people who are pushing drugs for them. That is a worrying development and it makes life much more difficult for police officers.

It is not sufficient to insist that anyone who has a conviction for violence or for drug dealing should not keep one of those dogs. I would make it a condition of the regulations that no one should keep such a dog on premises in which someone who has had a conviction is living. It would be very easy for someone to put the ownership of the dog into the name of another person on the premises and still keep the dog to make detection more difficult and to carry on the illegal activities for which the dog is kept. We should say, "We dearly want to see that breed of dogs phased out, but, in the circumstances you can keep one, but you must not keep it in premises in which someone is living who has been convicted of a crime of violence or a drug-related offence."

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand why the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) moved the amendment. He told the Committee that he has in mind the tragic incident last year in which two dogs killed the daughter of one of his constituents and were under the control of a young woman of 11. It is just possible that his amendment is aimed at the wrong target. It would make the person in charge of the dog liable to the criminal offence, rather than the owner of the dog who had allowed the person concerned to be in charge of it. It is true that the greater culpability must be with the owner rather than with the person in charge.

The Bill recognises the responsibility of all dog owners in that respect. The criminal offence in clause 3, which applies to all dogs, makes it clear that the owner and the person in charge of the dog who is not the owner can be guilty of the offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place.

Clause 3(2) creates a defence if the accused person can prove that the dog was in the charge of a person whom he reasonably believed to be a fit and proper person to be in charge of it. Clearly, it will be difficult for the owner of a prohibited or dangerous dog who was irresponsible enough to allow a young child to be in charge to convince the courts that that child was a fit and proper person. If convicted, the owner would face up to six months' imprisonment and, possibly, a stiff fine as well. If it was an aggravated offence where injury was caused, the owner would face up to two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

In addition, the hon. Gentleman will find that in clause 8(3) there is some help in interpreting references to dogs kept on a lead. That clause makes it clear that references to a dog being kept on a lead are to its being securely held in that manner by the person for the time being in charge of it. Again, it would be difficult for anyone to claim, particularly an owner, that a young child—for example, a girl of 11—without the physical strength of an adult, could reasonably be expected to ensure that the types of dog covered by clauses 1 and 2 are securely held.

Mr. McAllion: It is a matter of how we interpret the words "young child". Perhaps people can accept that it relates to a child of 11 or 12. Is there an age limit at which the Government would issue guidance that no one should allow a person below that age to be in charge of a dog?

Mrs. Rumbold: As the hon. Gentleman said, it is quite difficult to do that, because a 16-year-old boy who is fully grown as a young man would be competent and capable of containing a dog. There is a difficulty in trying to define the specific age of any young person, given the many differences in growth among people. The hon. Gentleman could accept that those clauses would be a powerful incentive to any dog owner to make absolutely certain that, whatever type of dog is involved—the matter has less to do with age than with physique and ability to control a dog—the person would be a fit and proper person to look after that dog.

Mr. Corbett: I go a long way with the Minister—age is not the main determinant. However, an owner could say, in his defence, "This person, aged 11, has regularly taken the dog out twice a week without any bother for the last two years. The attack that led to the court appearance was so unusual that I had no reason to believe that that person would be unable to exercise proper control." Will the Minister at least consider introducing a minimum age so that the risk can be reduced?

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but I am not sure that it follows that if one identifies the minimum age one necessarily can convince the courts, due to the individual circumstances that surround each case. A child of five in charge of, say, an alsatian would clearly be unable to exercise proper control. Any court would say that that was neither safe nor sensible. If, however, a girl of 14 was in charge of such a dog, it would be for the court to reach a decision. Case law would, I believe, cover such an incident.

The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun also referred to criminals owning pit bull terriers. It is certainly true that criminals own large dogs. It is also true that people with no criminal convictions own them. Most men like to have large and aggressive dogs as a macho, fashion accessory. Some of them are pit bull terriers. We want to ensure that those dogs are not used by criminals to intimidate, attack or help them in their criminal activities. The Bill achieves that purpose without the hon. Gentleman's amendment. It would be highly unusual to single out, as an additional punishment for people convicted of violent and drug-related offences, the loss of the right to own a dog.

No one would argue that people convicted of those offences should not forfeit other rights, such as the right to own a car. It is more likely that criminals would use a car in connection with their activities rather than a dog. A convincing case can be made for that, notwithstanding the American experience of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

Mr. McKelvey: If a common poacher were caught poaching, the courts would take off him the means by which he poached. That sometimes includes the car in which the poacher carries off his loot. If we cannot legislate to stop felons using dogs for that purpose, but if they are convicted for using dogs for that purpose, presumably the dogs can be taken away from them. That would prevent them from using dogs for that purpose in the future. If a person can be prevented from keeping a dog because he or she ill-treats it, I do not understand why we cannot legislate to prevent people from keeping dogs and using them for that illicit purpose.

Mrs. Rumbold: If a person were caught using a dog for the criminal purposes of bringing in drugs or using drugs, that person would be imprisoned. The dog would not then have an owner and would have to be put down. The hon. Gentleman has this very unpleasant picture of criminals and others going around with their pit bull terriers by their side. Let us consider, however, what will happen after the Bill becomes law. Those people will be required to have their dogs on leads and muzzled. That will reduce their capacity to intimidate the public and will provide the general public with protection against injury.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Police officers often have to go into a house where there is one of these dogs. These circumstances will be particularly worrying for a police officer who knows that he is involved in a drugs raid and that such a dog is inside the house.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is nothing to prevent a police officer, if he wishes, from taking with him experienced people such as veterinary surgeons who would be happy to assist. I do not believe that that will present a great difficulty. Those who did not muzzle and keep their dogs on a lead in public, whether they were criminals or not, would be criminals afterwards, and face the possibility of a gaol sentence and a heavy fine. The dogs would be neutered. I am not sure that many of the people whom the hon. Gentleman has in mind would regard having a castrated dog on a lead and a muzzle as good for their image——

It being Three o'clock, THE SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, *pursuant to the Order this day, put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Amendment negatived.

THE SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *then put forthwith the remaining Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

IMPORT OF ANIMALS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5518/91 relating to veterinary checks on live animals entering the Community from third countries; and supports the Government's objective of ensuring that the eventual rules contain the necessary safeguards against the introduction and spread of serious diseases.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

That this House remains opposed to but takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10749/90 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 14th May 1991 relating to certificates of specific character for foodstuffs and 10837/90 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 3rd May 1991 relating to the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs; and supports the Government's intention to seek amendments which will encourage producer innovation without undermining the Single Market principles of free and fair trading, benefit consumers, the food industry and primary agricultural producers and facilitate international trade.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 11 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the current level of unemployment.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): Unemployment in the United Kingdom, measured on the consistent seasonally adjusted series, was 2,175,000 in April 1991. It remains the case that there are now 1·3 million more jobs in Britain than in 1979 and over 3 million more jobs than in 1983. Job prospects will again improve following the resumption of economic growth.

Mr. Jones: The Minister's statement will not offer any hope to the quarter more people in my constituency who have become unemployed since last year. Does he agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that such levels of unemployment are a price well worth paying for the faint or, should I say, vague signs of recovery that only his right hon. Friend discerns in the economy?

Mr. Howard: The point made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was that it is essential to overcome inflation if we are to restore competitiveness to our economy and create the conditions in which jobs can once again grow. If the hon. Gentleman is as concerned about unemployment as he claims to be, will he talk to his colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench and get them to abandon their job destruction package, which will destroy so many jobs in Britain?

Mr. Charles Wardle: Would not the greatest threat to jobs be to let inflation go unchecked or to impose a national minimum wage or, worse still, to do both? Is not that precisely what would result from the wild promises made repeatedly by the Opposition?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Opposition cling to that absurd policy which is denounced on both sides of the House and which would undoubtedly destroy jobs on a devastating scale; yet they claim to be concerned about the fate of the unemployed.

Mr. Wallace: With an estimated 5,500 compulsory or voluntary liquidations in the first quarter of this year in England and Wales, can the Secretary of State give us some idea how many jobs have been lost in small businesses this year? As banks are allegedly charging interest rates well above the base rate, what advice does the Minister with responsibility for small businesses give to the banks?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that one would need to take net figures for job creation if one were considering small businesses separately. The latest figures that we have show that during last year over 800 more businesses a week were starting up than were going out of business. It is typical of Opposition Members that they are keen to talk about businesses closing down, but they consistently fail to recognise the new businesses that are starting up and being created every day in Britain.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the minimum wages policy which exists, perhaps in name only, throughout the European Community and America is allowed to exist only because the levels of wages under it are so low and that the entry of the East Germans, whose attempt to raise wages artificially has created enormous unemployment, shows that if the Opposition were to try to impose their policy it would undoubtedly create enormous unemployment and dislocation in the labour market?

Mr. Howard: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I take this opportunity of correcting a fabrication that is being put about by the Opposition. It certainly is not the case that a statutory minimum wage exists within the EC. That is far from the truth. A statutory minimum wage exists in only four countries in the Community. In those countries, the points made by my hon. Friend are absolutely right: the minimum wage is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. If Labour Members are interested in reducing unemployment, they would do well to recognise that in socialist France and Spain, which have a statutory minimum wage policy, unemployment is far higher than in this country.

Mr. Blair: Will the Secretary of State confirm that this country has not only the fastest rising unemployment of any nation in Europe and in the western world, but falling output and investment and it is also cutting training for the unemployed? When will that unique combination of economic failure and political indifference end? When will the Government start to restore the training budget for the unemployed by introducing the work experience programme that they need and taking responsibility for the unemployment that they are creating?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows that only a short time ago I announced an increase of £120 million in resources for employment training. It is beyond dispute —the hon. Gentleman consistently fails to face up to this —that had Labour been in office over the past few years, unemployment would be much higher than it is today. Were Labour to gain office again in the future, unemployment would be very much higher than it is today. That is why the British people will never make the mistake of electing Labour to government.

Mr. David Martin: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that employment in Portsmouth is much better than it was at the time of the last general election and that the policies of private enterprise are the best to carry forward employment prospects? Will my right hon. and learned Friend keep emphasising that Labour's job-destroying

policies are the last thing that the people of Portsmouth want and that every previous Labour Government have left office with higher unemployment than they inherited?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. It is true that every Labour Government has left behind higher unemployment than when they took office. My hon. Friend's comments about the fall in unemployment in Portsmouth since the last general election apply across the whole country. *[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us move into calmer waters.

Rotherham TEC

2. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in training agencies and how many were engaged in full-time courses on 1 February in the area served by Rotherham training and enterprise councils; how many people are now so employed; and what is the change in the number of full-time training places since February.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): On 1 February 1991, there were 2,977 people in training in the area served by Rotherham training and enterprise council. On 30 April 1991, there were 2,392 people in training. The number of people employed by training providers is a matter for the providers themselves.

Mr. Hardy: A moment, ago the Secretary of State used the word "devastating". Does the Minister accept that areas that have been economically devastated during the past decade, such as South Yorkshire, should benefit from improved and more meaningful training, rather than suffer the cuts and curbs that have been inflicted on them in recent months? Does the Minister accept that we must prepare for the day when we have an intelligent Government who will encourage and revive industrial investment?

Mr. Jackson: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we must do everything that we can to help unemployed people. That may involve training, but also other measures, such as helping them to find work through building their confidence and motivation, and so on. The Government are providing a wide range of opportunities, which are leading to 100,000 people being placed in work every month.

Training Credits

3. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the measures that he has taken to implement his proposals for training credits for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Mr. Howard: The first 11 pilot schemes started in April and are offering training credits to around 45,000 young people—about 10 per cent. of the 16 and 17-year-olds leaving full-time education this year. The White Paper presented to the House on 20 May set out our aim that within the lifetime of the next Parliament, every 16 and 17-year-old leaving full-time education will have the offer of a place on a training scheme. I shall shortly be issuing a prospectus inviting bids from TECs to run a second round of schemes to operate from April 1993.

Mr. Hind: When my right hon. and learned Friend visits west Lancashire and Skelmersdale on Friday, will he point out to the employers whom he will meet that unemployment in west Lancashire is 37·5 per cent. lower than it was at the last general election? Will he point out also the advantages of his training credit scheme, the flexibility that it offers 16 and 17-year-olds, and the overall improvement in skills that it will offer to the work force in my constituency and in the north-west of England?

Mr. Howard: I look forward greatly to visiting my hon. Friend's constituency on Friday. I shall certainly take the opportunity of drawing the attention of employers there to everything that he said—although I expect them to know all about it already, as they are probably far too sensible to be taken in by the constant misrepresentations of the Labour party.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State visit Bradford, which suffers from soaring unemployment and has been known for years as "low-pay city"? Will he take my advice and refrain from lecturing the unemployed about the inequities of the minimum wage? What they would like is an explanation of why the right hon. and learned Gentleman has cut the city's training budget by £2 million, why training workshops stand idle and why training providers have been made redundant. That is what the unemployed want to hear; they do not want third-rate lectures about the minimum wage.

Mr. Howard: I have paid many enjoyable visits to Bradford in the past and look forward to visiting it again soon. Bradford has a particularly effective training and enterprise council, which is addressing its training needs in a particularly effective way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will want to associate himself fully with its excellent work.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that this year nearly 60 per cent. of 16-year-olds are staying on at school or going to college, which is what they should be doing if we are to catch up with our international competitors? For the minority of youngsters who still leave school at the earliest possible opportunity, my right hon. and learned Friend's training credits proposals are flexible and sensible and will enable those young people to make proper choices about the training that they take up.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her support. I entirely agree with her comments.

The training credits scheme—which is a world first for this country—epitomises the difference between the Government and the Labour party. We believe in giving young people opportunities and placing buying power in their hands; Labour believes in the dead hand of compulsion and that is the only policy that it has to offer.

Disabled People

4. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest steps that he has taken to improve the employment prospects of disabled people.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has continued to develop the wide range of mainstream and specialist services that

can help people with disabilities to get and keep employment. From this April, we have given unemployed people with disabilities priority access to four of our main employment and training programmes. In April, we also announced changes to improve the effectiveness of our specialist disability services and our local and national advisory bodies.

Mr. Ashley: Notwithstanding those steps, is the Minister aware that disabled people suffer from serious discrimination in the jobs market, although they are entitled to the same protection under the law as has been enjoyed by ethnic minorities and women for the past 15 years? The United States has introduced wide-ranging and effective anti-discrimination legislation; when will we follow suit?

Mr. Jackson: We have attempted to deal with that problem through, for example, the quota system, which has been in place for some 40 years but has not proved particularly effective.

The Department does not believe that the introduction of the legislation described by the right hon. Gentleman would be effective in combating discrimination, but we are doing a great deal to help people with disabilities. In 1989-90, the most recent year for which we have all the figures, about £400 million was spent to assist people with disabilities. That is a considerable increase on the spending of past years.

Mr. Hannam: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the increased opportunities that are being given to training and enterprise councils for training the disabled. Is he aware that the main colleges that train people with disabilities for industry—colleges such as St. Loyes in Exeter—rely increasingly on TECs to provide the necessary input? Will he give his full support to the pilot scheme that has enabled some regional TECs to come together to ensure that that input is provided?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is very important for TECs and colleges—and, indeed, others representing the interests of disabled people—to work closely together. It is interesting that 11 per cent. of the total spend on employment training carried out by the TECs goes to people with disabilities.

Mr. Irvine: Can my hon. Friend confirm that nowadays every disabled 16 and 17-year-old youngster has an opportunity to take up a training place? Can he also confirm that such opportunities were not available to disabled youngsters when Labour was last in power?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Disabled young people in the age group to which he referred benefit from the youth training guarantee, which was not available when the Labour party was in office. Furthermore, youth training was not available then, either. Only 6,000 young people had training places in 1979, compared with hundreds of thousands today.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under the age of 25 years are currently unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): In April 1991 there were 662,078 unemployed claimants under 25. That compares with 1,025,939 in April 1987 and 1,286,182 in January 1985. Latest comparable figures from the European Commission show that United Kingdom unemployment among the under-25s, at 12·3 per cent., is lower than the European Community average of 16·4 per cent.

Mr. Brown: Is not it true these days that many young people leave school with no job, no hope and no future? The reasons are obvious. In my constituency, for example, Ferranti is closing Bellesk house, Ranks Hovis McDougall is closing the Caledonia mills, and SAI, under Government pressure, is closing its fertiliser plant. That is a disgrace. Would not it be more appropriate if the Government got on their bike and allowed a socialist Government to take over? That is what is being demanded from outside.

Mr. Forth: I shall leave the hon. Gentleman to decide whether a socialist Government is on offer to the country. He may wish to discuss that with his hon. Friends.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned his constituency; he would want me to remind the House that when he was last elected, in 1987, 6,635 people were out of work there. He will rejoice with me that today only 4,300 people are out of work in his constituency. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in celebrating that fact and that instead of coming to the House and running his constituency down he will come here with tales of how successful the employers in his constituency can be and say that he will help them to continue that success.

Sir Robert McCrindle: As white-collar unemployment, not least among the under-25s, appears to be rising, arguably faster than unemployment in other sectors of the economy, will my hon. Friend reconsider some of the training programmes and initiatives—especially, perhaps, some of the advertising by his Department to aid the jobless? There are clear signs that the advertisements seem rather more clearly directed at those seeking jobs in manufacturing industry, whereas the fastest rise in unemployment is in evidence in the service sector, not least in London and the south-east.

Mr. Forth: I regret that my hon. Friend has got that impression. We have tried to take great care to ensure that advertising by the Department covers the full spread of activities. The answer to my hon. Friend's reasonable request is that the network of training and enterprise councils is almost complete throughout the land and that we are giving TECs the flexibility to identify local training needs in their communities and to tailor training programmes appropriately. Both the Secretary of State and the Department give that aspect great emphasis and my recent contact with TECs has given me enormous confidence that they can deliver a sensitively tailored local package of training for each area. I hope that the TEC in my hon. Friend's area is doing the same—I am sure that it is.

Mr. McLeish: Why do young people continue to bear the brunt of the Government's incompetence and mismanagement of the economy? Will the Minister tell the House why in the rest of Europe unemployment among the under-25s has been rising at 1 per cent. over the past year, whereas in Britain there has been a spectacular 32 per cent. increase? Will the party of mass unemployment tell us

now when it will take that issue seriously, or does it once again agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said that unemployment was a price well worth paying?

Mr. Forth: Let us take as an agreed starting point the figure that I gave in my original answer, which was that unemployment among the under-25s in this country is 12·3 per cent. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that, so far from having 12·3 per cent., socialist Spain—a country with which he will no doubt feel an affinity—has 29·9 per cent. unemployment among the under-25s. In Italy, which was run by a coalition Government when I last looked, the figure is 29·4 per cent. In France, a country often cited by the Opposition—at least when it suits them—the figure is 18·7 per cent. Our record may not be perfect, but the record of the continental countries is a jolly sight worse.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend is far too young to remember what it was like when there was last a Labour Government, but can he remind us from his records what was the usual practice for the majority of 16 and 17-year-olds when the previous Labour Government were in power and what is now on offer for them?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I am glad that he reminded me of what happened under the last Labour Government—although I shall have to take his word for it, for reasons that he gave. The Labour Government abandoned young people to the dole queue, whereas this Government have introduced positive and imaginative schemes to ensure that no 16, 17 and 18-year-old need be unemployed except from his own choice. That shows more clearly than anything the difference between this Government and the Opposition in terms of attitudes and policies.

Training Places

6. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training places are available under *(a)* training and enterprise councils, *(b)* other Government programmes and *(c)* local authority programmes; and how many were available under Government and local authority programmes in 1989 and 1990 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: The information is not available in the form requested. In March 1991, 547,000 people were in training provided through TECs and local enterprise companies. The corresponding figures for March 1990 and March 1989 were 554,000 and 553,000 respectively.

Mr. Griffiths: I am sorry that the Minister cannot give me the information in the form in which I requested it. Nevertheless, his reply shows that there has been a reduction in training places. Has there been a massive reduction in TEC-provided training places for the disabled? That has certainly happened with Mid Glamorgan TEC and I have the impression that the disabled have generally been forgotten by the TECs.

Mr. Howard: I assure the hon. Gentleman that that is not the case. I suspect that he may be confusing training providers with those who benefit from training. It is true that there have been particular difficulties in Mid Glamorgan, arising from the fact that many voluntary providers of training places have failed to achieve approved training organisation status, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that the needs of the disabled are fully taken into account by the TECs.

Mr. Paice: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most important questions to be taken into account in considering training places is the number of people available for them? Is not it true that we face a substantial decline in the number of young people of school-leaving age and just above, added to which there has been a welcome but substantial increase in the number of young people staying on at school and undertaking further education, and that that is a perfectly understandable reason why there should be less need to have so many training places available for people in that age group?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We maintain a guarantee of a youth training place to every young school leaver aged 16 or 17 who is unemployed and we shall continue to honour that guarantee.

Mr. Leighton: Can the Secretary of State tell us the name of a single chairman of a training and enterprise council or of a single member of a TEC board who supports the cuts that he made in his Department's training budget? At a time when trainers are being made redundant right across the country, why is he sabotaging the TEC movement?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that the TEC movement is going from strength to strength and is far from being sabotaged. Members of TEC boards would take the hon. Gentleman's criticisms very ill indeed. He knows, as Chairman of the Employment Select Committee, that, as a result of surveys that we carried out, we carefully considered the provision needed. We have adjusted the balance of training places and other provision, and this year we are providing up to 100,000 extra opportunities for unemployed people in job clubs and under the job interview guarantee scheme.

Mr. Batiste: When evaluating the more than 500,000 training places that are available today, will my right hon. and learned Friend recall how many such training places were available in 1979 under the Labour Government?

Mr. Howard: I can give my hon. Friend the figures. When the Labour party left office in 1979, 6,000 young people were receiving training; the comparable figure today is 350,000

Disabled People

7. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken by his Department to encourage training initiatives for people with disabilities.

Mr. Howard: Training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies in Scotland are required to set out in their business plans how they intend to provide training for people with special needs, including those with disabilities. These plans form the basis of their contract. From April this year, people with disabilities are being given higher priority than before by being included in the aim group for employment training.

Mr. Clarke: Will the Secretary of State meet the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, which will provide him with concrete evidence of how young disabled people are being denied their training rights? Will he inform the training and enterprise councils that they have a contractual responsibility to deal with these matters, and that they should meet it? Will he discourage his ministerial colleague from complaining about the quota system as Departments have an appalling record, and his own is no exception?

Mr. Howard: I will not answer the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question because the Government's position on the quota was explained fully a few moments ago by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. My hon. Friend or I would be happy to meet the organisation to which the hon. Gentleman referred. We are happy to discuss these matters with it, and I can confirm that training and enterprise councils are contractually bound to make available training places for people with special needs, including people with disabilities.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Government introduced the legislation that ensures that all 16 and 17-year-olds, including disabled youngsters, are entitled to training, and that that legislation did not exist under the Labour Government? It is humbug to pretend otherwise.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. There was no guarantee for young people, disabled or otherwise, when the Labour party was in office. It is no use Opposition Members parroting from sedentary positions matters relating to unemployment at that time, because we know very well that Ministers in the previous Labour Government wanted to introduce schemes such as we have introduced but did not have the resources to do so because of the abject failure of their economic policy.

Labour Statistics

9. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the unemployment figures for Eccles for *(a)* April 1990 and *(b)* April 1991.

Mr. Jackson: On the unadjusted basis, there were 3,609 unemployed claimants in the Eccles parliamentary constituency in April 1991, compared with 2,919 in April 1990.

Miss Lestor: May I remind the Minister that every time the Government change the method by which they calculate unemployment and knock hundreds of people off the register, it does not alter the reality that the people who have been knocked off the register are still unemployed? Furthermore, will he recognise that we do not have a minimum wage in Eccles, in the travel-to-work area of Salford or in the north-west, but we have a growing number of unemployed people, particularly among those under 25? Does he think that that is more likely to be explained by a lack of investment and a lack of training than by anything else?

Mr. Jackson: As the hon. Lady referred to the minimum wage, she must say whether it would help to improve employment prospects in Eccles.

Equal Pay

10. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women now have equal pay with men.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available. Between 1970 and 1990 the differential between men's and women's full-time average hourly earnings narrowed significantly. This demonstrates that the labour market, reinforced by equal pay legislation, is working to the advantage of women.

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that when Labour introduced equal pay legislation in 1974, every Tory said that it would cost 1 million women's jobs and that it would decimate the retail industry and catering? It did not. Is he aware that the minimum wage of £3·40 an hour proposed by Labour would not either? McDonald's would sell just as many hamburgers after the minimum wage is introduced as it does now. The only difference would be that McDonald's employees would receive a damned good pay rise, but there would be the same number of jobs.

Mr. Jackson: I am sure that the progress that has been made towards equal pay for men and women has occurred because of the operation of the labour market and of demographics rather than legislative intervention. Intervention in the form of a minimum wage as proposed by the hon. Gentleman would certainly reduce the availability of jobs, which would be especially damaging to the interests of women and of disabled workers.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does the Minister recognise that women do not wish to be patronised by the Labour party and that the Labour party's commitment to women and to minimum wage levels would better be demonstrated if it gave women minimal opportunity in the trade union movement?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Does the Minister agree with the assessment of the Equal Opportunities Commission that our present equal pay laws are a paradise for lawyers, but hell for women? Will the Government continue with their present line of hypocrisy and incompetence when dealing with equal pay? Most of the gains were made in the early days of the equal pay legislation under the previous Labour Government. Do the Government intend to respond positively to the Equal Opportunities Commission's demand for tougher laws on equal pay and if so, will they do so soon?

Mr. Jackson: I have discussed these issues with the Equal Opportunities Commission. It is difficult to find a way around the problem of establishing in law what is equal value for equal pay and of applying it in particular cases. It requires extensive advice from experts, which draws out the proceedings. I must say that we have succeeded in improving the position of women workers. We have the second highest proportion of women at work in the European Community and there are more women working in Britain—about 12 million—than in any other country in the European Community. That suggests that we have been doing a good job for women.

Education and Training

11. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The White Paper has had a very positive reception. Training and enterprise councils and local education authorities have welcomed our proposals and are keen to contribute to the delivery of education and the development of their responsibilities in this area.

My Department is making rapid progress in implementing those of the White Paper's proposals for which we are responsible. I shall be sending a prospectus to TECs next week inviting bids to run the 1993 training credit schemes. A prospectus inviting bids for new compacts will follow. Progress is also being made in taking forward partnerships between TECs and LEAs for supervising the careers service.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is not it correct that training credits will give our young people choice and incentives in training rather than the incentive to stay on the dole offered by the Opposition? The Opposition's policies would reduce the number of jobs, reduce choice and reduce the incentives to train.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He is clear about the difference between the parties on that subject. I wish that the same could be said for the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) who, when questioning me on the White Paper, said that he would see how the training credits progressed, although he knew perfectly well that training credits were entirely inconsistent with the policy of compulsion pursued by the Opposition.

Mr. Fatchett: Is not it clear that despite the very expensive public relations launch of the White Paper, it contained no figures on the cost of introducing the measures proposed? Does not that make it clear that the Government, who have already made cuts in training at a time of rising unemployment, have neither the political nor the economic will to ensure that this country secures the best educated and best trained work force in western Europe? The Government need to consider not their White Paper, but their record. If trainers do that, they will realise that they have no future to look forward to.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman could not be more wrong. When the White Paper was introduced, I gave the additional cost of the training credit proposal—of £14 million and £35 million—in the first two years of its operation. The hon. Gentleman simply does not know what he is talking about. I had hoped that he would rise to clarify the confusion that exists in the mind of his hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on these matters.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those who opposed the technical and vocational education initiative, who fought against youth training and who opposed the introduction of the youth training scheme are utterly discredited on any question of education and training? Will he give the Labour party one last chance to come into the 20th century and to recognise the contribution that all those schemes have made to training for young people?

Mr. Howard: I am not optimistic that the Labour party would take that opportunity. The Labour party has opposed tooth and nail every training initiative that the Government have introduced over the past 12 years. Labour has no credentials to talk about training.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the unemployment figures for 1979-80 and 1989-90.

Mr. Howard: On the consistent seasonally adjusted basis, United Kingdom unemployment averaged 1,072,500 in the financial year 1979-80 compared with 1,702,200 in 1989-90.

Mr. Haynes: Does not the Secretary of State feel ashamed of himself? Is he aware that a Secretary of State not far from him is on his way, according to the newspapers? The whole House will agree that it is time he went.

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman, who has long experience of these matters and who has a particular contribution to make, will at least have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench and tell them how damaging their proposals for a minimum wage would be. The hon. Gentleman knows that Barbara Castle pointed out in 1969 how devastating such proposals would be. Why cannot he have a word with his hon. Friends and get them to see sense?

Training and Enterprise Councils

13. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is taking to increase the role of training and enterprise councils in strengthening the ties between employers and education.

Mr. Howard: Training and enterprise councils already have a major role in strengthening local ties between employers and education. The White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" creates new opportunities to extend those ties through the extension of training credits, the expansion of compacts and involvement in the careers service, in partnership with local education authorities.

Mr. Brazier: Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in sending good wishes to the Canterbury Industrial Consultative Council whose representatives are having lunch today in the House of Commons and several of whose members are active with the new Kent training and enterprise council? Does he agree that the TECs provide the opportunity to bring training closer to the marketplace and to ensure that training in each county is exactly the training needed by local employers and by local industry?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Kent TEC is one of the 11 pilot schemes for the training credit and that is having a revolutionary effect on the attitude of young people in our county and in other counties.

Labour Statistics

14. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in the United Kingdom and the north-west region of England.

Mr. Jackson: In April 1991, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,175,100, compared with 275,300 in the north-west region.

Mr. Evans: Will the huge further increase in unemployment to be announced later this week demonstrate that the Government's economic strategy is working and that unemployment is a worthwhile price to pay to get inflation down?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that unemployment in his constituency of St. Helens is 34 per cent. lower than it was at the time of the last election.

Minimum Wage

16. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations from the Fabian Society concerning proposals for a national minimum wage.

Mr. Howard: I have not received any representations from the Fabian Society but I have a copy of its recent pamphlet "Making a Minimum Wage Work". The Fabians quote an independent estimate that the Labour party's policy for a national minimum wage could destroy up to 880,000 jobs.

Mr. Norris: As it is now well known that a policy of minimum wages is likely to destroy jobs in their hundreds of thousands, will my right hon. and learned Friend take steps to abolish the remainder of the wages councils, which do nothing to protect employment and everything to destroy jobs?

Mr. Howard: I have already made it clear that wages councils do not have a permanent place in our system. As to the minimum wage, I want to be fair to the Labour party. I am prepared to make it this offer. If it does not accept our estimates of how many jobs a minimum wage would cost, it can let me have its estimate of how many jobs it would cost. I am prepared to have its estimates examined by my Department's officials. We will publish the results and let the country know them so that everyone knows just how devastatingly damaging the Labour party's proposals would be.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the England cricket team on the marvellous win in Yorkshire yesterday? Does he equally welcome the sharp fall in wage increases announced yesterday and in producer prices announced today? Does not that demonstrate that his Government's policies against inflation have what it takes to build a long and successful innings while the whole country knows that under Labour the economy would be for ever trapped leg before wicket?

The Prime Minister: There are some dangerous metaphors there. I certainly welcome the producer price figures. They are extremely good. The fall in the underlying, as well as the headline, rate of inflation is very welcome news indeed. It shows clearly that we are now well on target for the Budget forecast of a 4 per cent. inflation rate this autumn. It is also encouraging that wage bargaining is beginning to reflect falling inflation and the realities of exchange rate mechanism membership. That is very good indeed for industries' competitiveness. On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I am happy to congratulate the England team, but, in doing so, I remind him and everyone that the West Indies is a formidable side and there is a long way to go yet.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister now be asking his right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) to step down as President of the Bruges group?

The Prime Minister: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

Mr. Kinnock: Is it not apparent from today's events and yesterday's events that what we are seeing is not Britain at the heart of Europe but deep division at the heart of the Conservative party? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: Is it not the Prime Minister's duty to clear up the confusion in the ranks of his own Government, which can do nothing but damage Britain's interests?

The Prime Minister: I am not quite sure what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) might think about the degree of unity that the right hon. Gentleman suggests is on his Benches. We are negotiating in the intergovernmental conferences on exactly the same basis as that on which we first started. The position on economic and monetary union has not changed in any way. I have set out repeatedly the circumstances and conditions under which we are negotiating.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Prime Minister tell us why 11 finance Ministers and a couple of Commissioners in a meeting yesterday with the Chancellor got entirely the wrong end of the stick?

The Prime Minister: I can say categorically to the right hon. Gentleman, as I did a moment ago, that there is no change whatever in our negotiating position on Europe. I have repeatedly set that out over recent months.

Q2. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: In welcoming the current ministerial visit to the Lebanon and in recognising the help that the Syrian and Iranian Governments are providing on the hostage problem, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he

recognises an additional ingredient in the conundrum, namely, the holding by the Israeli Government of Sheikh Obeid and other Lebanese hostages? Will he please make known on behalf of his Government to Mr. Shamir that that ingredient is a problem, and that we expect the Israelis to be as helpful as possible in resolving it?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend, and can tell him that the Prime Minister of Israel is aware of my views on that matter. It is wrong for any country to take and hold hostages, and I have communicated that view to Israel on more than one occasion. Our objective is to see the release as soon as possible of all hostages, and we count on any Government with influence to use it for the return of hostages. They should be back with their families where they belong.

Q3. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beith: How will the Prime Minister respond to the demand from those of his supporters who say that he should veto a single currency here and now? Will he back a single currency when it comes before this Parliament for decision, or is he scared to say?

The Prime Minister: There is no veto as such. There is a requirement that treaty changes can come into effect only if agreed by all member states and by their Parliaments. I have repeatedly said that we will not agree to any treaty on EMU which does not safeguard the interests of this country. I am happy to reiterate that.

Sir Michael Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to welcome the visit to the House of Britain's first astronaut, Helen Sharman? Does he agree that her courage and professionalism is a matter of national pride? Will he take this opportunity to urge British industry and science to join with the Government in the careful and continued look at further opportunities for international space collaboration?

The Prime Minister: I look forward to meeting Miss Sharman shortly and to congratulating her on her courage and on her remarkable achievement. I happily agree with my hon. Friend's other comments.

Q4. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir David Steel: Is the Prime Minister aware that there are some creatures who, when removed from their settled natural habitat, can turn dangerously unpredictable in their behaviour *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir David Steel: Since allowing them to wander freely abroad has caused some difficulty—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Interruptions take up a great deal of time.

Sir David Steel: —has the right hon. Gentleman any proposals to extend the requirements for muzzles and leashes to the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher)?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, every hon. Member has the right and the duty to speak their mind, and that is entirely proper.

Mr. Tony Banks: She never said that.

The Prime Minister: That is entirely proper, and it is a freedom which I propose to exercise myself.

Q5. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townsend: Now that Mr. James Baker's middle east peace mission has fallen into serious trouble, and given that the United Kingdom was the first sponsor of United Nations' resolution 242, would not this be a good moment for the United Kingdom and its European Community partners to start playing a far more positive role in the search for a lasting peace settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We have played an important role in that process for many years, and it is right that, in the forthcoming peace conference, the European Community should play a leading role. I welcome the recent Israeli agreement that the European Community presidency should participate in the conference that will be held soon. That is a welcome advance.

Q6. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: If the Prime Minister is so confident about the Government's proposal on health service trusts, why is it that the Mersey regional health authority is keeping its expensively produced business plans for the second wave of opt-outs a secret? It will not even release them to Members of Parliament. Why can we not have all this information out in the open, have a proper debate on the subject and then a ballot? Let us find out what the people of Merseyside think.

The Prime Minister: I believe that there will be many opportunities for Mersey debates in the weeks to come and I look forward to those with great relish. Every reform of the health service has been controversial, but, in due course, each has proved to be irreversible and in the interests of the health service. Our recently introduced changes will follow the same course.

Mr. Norris: Will my right hon. Friend intervene in the local government review to look at a local authority in Britain where people wait eight weeks to have their bins emptied, where thousands of council houses lie empty and where kids have to run the gauntlet of a picket line to get to school? My right hon. Friend will know that this is not fiction; it is Labour Liverpool under so-called moderate Labour control. If this is how the Labour party runs a city, how will it run a country?

The Prime Minister: I strongly suspect that the whole country will have observed how Liverpool has been run and drawn appropriate conclusions from that about how a Labour Government would work on a larger scale. Whether the Labour council is far left or moderate, it has done that great city no favours, just as a Labour Government would do this country no favours.

Q7. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKelvey: Will the Prime Minister give some serious consideration to the plight of two brave but unfortunate young men in my constituency, Walter and Ian Baird, of the same family, who are 21 and 16-years-old and who have contracted AIDS through blood transfusion? Although a settlement of over £45,000 for the pair of them was agreed over two months ago, they have yet to be paid. Why is it that 10 per cent. of the payment seems to be held up in Scotland?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will give me precise details of the cases that he has in mind, I shall be happy to examine them and respond to them.

Q8. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend make sure that there are enough funds in the English Heritage budget to ensure that a certain building in the Walworth road is preserved, so that my children and grandchildren can not only read about the demise of socialism but can go and see where the last of the Bolsheviks are working, led by a leader who was a co-producer and director of a play called "Promises, promises"?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point as only he can.

Dr. Owen: Will the Prime Minister confirm that he is as determined to strengthen and enlarge the European Community as he is to prevent the emergence of a united states of Europe? Will he tell the European Community that positively negotiating and participating in those negotiations does not in any way surrender a final decision on the overall package to protect the best interests of this country, and that while the devil, as always, is in the detail, so can be the benefits, and that it will probably be December before we can make an overall decision on the package that is negotiated?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely correct in his latter point and I strongly support his remarks about a wider Europe, which I believe should involve not only the EFTA states but, in due course, the eastern European states. I agree with him that negotiations on the two conferences are of vital importance to the future of this country. Whatever decisions are made may have a profound effect on our trade and well-being. I have set out often enough to the House that the economic case for monetary union has not been made, that we cannot accept the imposition of a single currency and that any proposed changes to the treaty of Rome—a move to a single currency—would require a separate decision by the United Kingdom Government and Parliament—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members do not wish to hear about the important negotiating position of the Government, that is a matter for them. Against that background, I shall negotiate with our European partners for what I believe to be right for this country. It will then be for this House to decide at the conclusion of those negotiations whether it is content to accept them.

BILL PRESENTED

British Nationality (Amendment)

Mr. Keith Vaz, supported by Mr. Max Madden, presented a Bill to amend Schedule 1 to the British Nationality Act 1981 so as to remove, for applicants aged over 60, the requirement that an applicant should have knowledge of the English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic language: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 July and to be printed. [Bill 174.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Points of Order

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, a week or two ago, a number of Opposition Members raised points of order suggesting that questions concerning national health service hospital trusts could not be tabled in the Table Office. At that time I expressed concern about that. The immediate response from the Table Office to me was that that was inaccurate. Since then, I have written to the Principal Clerk of the Table Office, who has replied to me saying, and I quote——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not quote in the Chamber correspondence that we have had with Officers of the House.

Mr. Riddick: I accept that, Mr. Speaker, so to paraphrase the reply that I received, he confirms that the tabling of questions about NHS trusts is entirely in order and that there has been no question—*[Interruption.]*—of them not being in order. My point of order is to ask you what can be done to stop entirely bogus and inaccurate points of order being raised by Opposition Members for purely party political reasons. Is it not clearly an abuse of this House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I can help the hon. Member. It is not just the correspondence that he has had with the Clerk. The Leader of the House himself confirmed it, so I do not know what is the reason for his point of order for me.

Mr. Riddick: I was asking you, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The incident took place a few weeks ago, and it was cleared up absolutely by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for pointing that out. Following those points of order, I received a letter from a constituent saying that it was disgraceful that questions about NHS trusts could not be tabled and answered in the House. In other words, Opposition Members successfully communicated to people outside—*[Interruption.]*—inaccurate information through points of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is robust enough to reply to his constituent in straight terms to put the records straight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we sat until 3 o'clock this morning and are likely to have to do the same again tonight. It is all very well for hon. Members to raise points of order at this time, it being prime time from their point of view, but it takes time away from other hon. Members later in the evening.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is very brief.

Mr. Nicholls: The point of order concerns the accuracy of *Hansard*. Early-day motion No. 934 concerns the deplorable behaviour of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), but the record shows that it is signed by 11 hon. Members, including one member of the Labour Whips Office. Although I fully accept that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie) is entitled to sign that excellent motion—we must all be grateful to him for doing so—the difficulty is that, of the 11 signatories, only seven are printed. If one member of the Labour party is prepared to sign it, it would be useful to know which other members would be prepared to do so. If all the names were printed, we could find out how many members of the Labour party agree with the motion. We could also discover which members are so careless that they do not even know what they are signing.

Mr. Speaker: Again, I do not know quite what the hon. Gentleman's point of order is for me. Perhaps he was a Minister when the rules regarding the printing of names on early-day motions were changed. It was done to save costs and time, but the names are available in the Table Office, if required.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to a practice whereby Ministers refer parliamentary questions to be answered by the chief executive of executive agencies? That ensures that the answers do not appear in *Hansard*, thereby denying the right of hon. Members to read those answers in *Hansard*. It also denies members of the public who read *Hansard* in public libraries throughout the country the right to see answers to questions that have been tabled by hon. Members. Such a practice is a serious erosion of parliamentary democracy and I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on what you can do about it.

Mr. Speaker: That is old hat, too. [HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Well, it has been going on for the best part of a year, and if the hon. Gentleman objects to it—I understand his feelings—he should draw the matter to the attention of the Leader of the House at Business Questions. I cannot deal with the matter.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I hope that it is legitimate.

Mr. Hughes: Naturally, Mr. Speaker. As you know, a by-election is pending. I seek your guidance on the rules of the House about the moving of the writ for the by-election. It has become plain over the past few days in Liverpool, Walton that the Labour party has been split in two. I seek your guidance on which of the warring factions of the Labour party should seek to move the writ for the by-election: the real or the genuine Labour party.

Mr. Speaker: I have been in the House for long enough —a little longer than the hon. Gentleman—to know that there are divisions on both sides of the House. They are not a matter for me. I consider that every hon. Member in his own right should be able to put the views of his constituents. I could not adjudicate on such a matter.

We must move on to the ten-minute rule Bill.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Let us have some entertainment.

Mr. Speaker: Well, the television cameras will soon be switched off.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Further to the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), Mr. Speaker. The decision about

questions being transferred to the chief executives of executive agencies is taken politically by the Government. We were informed by letter—we were not asked. It has given rise to a practice that denies to the House rights that it previously had, without debate in the Chamber or changes to Standing Orders. You, Mr. Speaker, could rule on this matter, or at least consider it, and direct Ministers to answer questions when they are put. We do not care whether the chief executive writes to the Minister to give him the answer, as long as it is printed in *Hansard* so that we can all read it.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that point, but I do not have any more to say about it than I have already said to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). The matter should be taken up with the Leader of the House, perhaps most usefully through the usual channels, of which the hon. Gentleman was once a part.

Cohabitation (Contract Enforcement)

3.33 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for the enforcement of contracts entered into between cohabiting partners; and for connected purposes.

The Bill seeks to encourage people who share a home or property to make proper contractual arrangements about their joint possessions. It sets out the ownership rights to prevent family quarrels and bad feelings if the relationship breaks down, and gives guidance to the courts when dealing with such cases.

In recent times, there has been a considerable change of behaviour in society as many more people set up homes together without making any formal arrangements. They may be two friends who decide to share a house together. They may be elderly people who decide to give up their own homes to move in with younger relatives and who invest all their savings in that new home or they may be young couples. Nowadays, almost 1 million young couples aged between 18 and 40 live together without any formal arrangements about the property that they jointly use and enjoy. Those relationships are particularly important, as they may involve children who may not be protected if those relationships break down.

Friends can fall out, granny can die or a partnership may break up. In those circumstances, all hell often breaks loose, because there is a dispute about who owns what. There is no specific body of law to protect people in those circumstances, even if a contract between the parties exists. For historical reasons, the courts have been loth to recognise the intention behind such agreements even if they exist. That attitude harks back to the time when a man and woman who lived together without a formal marriage were deemed to be living in sin.

Couples who live together may do so through choice, but sometimes they do so because one of them cannot obtain a divorce from a previous partner. Such relationships can break down, as do marriages, but whereas both partners are much better protected under matrimonial law and are usually entitled to equal shares in the joint property, there is no such protection for couples who are simply living together.

It is a commonly held belief that, after living together for some time, people acquire rights as the common-law wife or husband. That is true in Scotland, but it is not true of England and Wales, and has not been for the past 230 years. People do not automatically acquire rights to maintenance or, in the case of the death of one of the partners, to property that was held jointly during that relationship. A woman left in such circumstances often has no right even to remain in what is the family home to care for the children of the relationship. There is a case for the Government to introduce legislation to make matters clear.

In a recent case, a woman who had helped to build up a successful business in partnership with the man with whom she had lived for 10 years was told by a judge that she had no rights to the value of that business because, early on in the relationship, she had refused marriage. In those circumstances, the judge decided that she could not claim any ownership of the business that had been built up.

Another couple lived together for 30 years without being married, because the man was married to a Catholic who would not divorce him. That couple had six children and they built up a home. On his death, however, the woman found that she had no rights to that home or to any other property. All the property was claimed by the man's wife.

Such cases cause a great deal of unhappiness. People often seek the help of lawyers, but they are unable to give it, as there is no body of case law from which the lawyer can draw. He therefore has to fall back on the property rights involved. One is told that, if one has a receipt for the house, the three-piece suite, the kitchen cabinet or whatever, one can claim for it. Otherwise, it is usually deemed to be the property of one partner, and not necessarily the partner who paid for it.

Three young women solicitors of Coventry have done a great deal of work on this subject. They have written an excellent book to explain the problem called "Living Together". Those who are interested may well obtain a copy. The authors outline many sad cases. There was a case in my constituency of two policemen who were killed while working as divers. One was married to his partner, so his wife had full rights to pensions and so on. In the other case, the relationship was not a formal marriage so the woman got nothing—no pension, no house, nothing of what she was entitled to.

Increasingly these days, elderly people give up their own homes and go to live with younger relatives. They may put a lot of money into these buildings—perhaps buying a new and larger house—but without a will or a contract, their estate can make no claim on the property that they brought into the relationship. That is another good reason for encouraging contracts of this sort.

In other cases, young people sell their homes and go to live with grandad or granny, but they find that they cannot get on together and that the money that they put into repairs or modernisation is completely lost to them, and they can get nothing of it back.

All these events need regularisation by new legislation. The courts need guidance so that judges dealing with these cases know what Parliament expects of them. Young women especially go into these relationships starry-eyed and come out baggy-eyed and the worse for wear. It is time Parliament considered the matter seriously and introduced some sanity and guidance to the law. There is an urgent need for the Government to give such guidance to the public and the courts.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Teresa Gorman, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. David Evans, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. David Shaw, Mr. Andrew McKay and Mr. Jonathan Aitken.

COHABITATION (CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT)

Mrs. Teresa Gorman accordingly presented a Bill to make provision for the enforcement of contracts entered into between cohabiting partners; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 21 June and to be printed. [Bill 175.]

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*.]

Clause 1

REPEAL OF SECTION 101 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988

3.46 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 1, line 6, at beginning insert—

'( ) This section shall have effect for the period between Royal Assent and a date specified by an Order made by the Secretary of State, such date to be not later than the date of implementation of a scheme of local taxation which shall be based on the occupation of property.'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No 15, in page 1, line 9, leave out from 'shall' to end and insert

'have no effect during the period specified in accordance with subsection ( ) above'.

No. 19, in page 1, line 11, leave out from 'also' to end and insert

'have no effect during the period specified in accordance with subsection ( ) above'.

No. 20, in page 1, line 17, after 'subsections', insert ( ),'.

No. 38, in page 1, line 19, leave out '1992' and insert '1993'

No. 57, in clause 7, page 7, line 2, leave out 'two' and insert '12'.

Mr. Blunkett: First, with the indulgence of the Committee, I should like to add the thanks of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) and of all elected Sheffield Members to the thanks offered to Helen Sharman by the Prime Minister earlier this afternoon for her presence in the House. All of us from Sheffield and across Britain wish her well and congratulate her on her tremendous feat on behalf of the country. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Today and tomorrow, spent in Committee, should and could have been used not to centralise power still further in the hands of the Government but to bring immediate relief to poll tax payers across Britain. We could have used this time to ensure that the poll tax disappeared by 1 April next year and that people who have suffered under it could breathe a sigh of relief knowing that a property tax would be reinstated. Instead, this afternoon, we have a petty little measure which, as can be seen from the Order Paper, seeks to cap all authorities in Britain irrespective of their size or spending power.

The amendment seeks to limit the range of capping powers to ensure that the proposed future property tax —hopefully, our fair rates—is introduced as quickly as possible. If there is not a general election between now and this date 12 months hence we will have sat through the winter on the proposed council tax. If we are to see a future in which people are free to raise and spend money sensibly, it is clear that capping should go at the earliest opportunity.

The Bill seeks to do the exact opposite—to spread capping to those authorities with budgets of less than £15 million per year, irrespective of their circumstances and the method by which those resources are raised and spent.

It will be recalled that, originally, capping was not to apply at all under the poll tax. In its original draft, it was conceived to be unnecessary, because the poll tax would bring accountability to every local authority in Britain. It was said that the poll tax would bring accountability by ensuring that the individual paying a flat rate tax would be made aware of exactly what money was being raised and spent in the locality—that it would not be spread across the generality of electors, but would be concentrated on each individual. As a consequence, they would feel the pain—I use the word advisedly—that came from spending on public services, and they would remove elected representatives who were minded to raise and spend money on the very public services that Conservative Members praise one day and do their best to destroy the next.

When it was discovered that the Prime Minister of the day was minded to keep hold of the bureaucratic central controls which capping had brought from 1985, when it was realised that there were electors throughout the country of all shades of local authority political opinion who would want to spend money on services rather than destroy them, the Government had a change of heart.

The right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who now occupies the post of Secretary of State for unemployment, decided in a speech on 28 October 1987 that capping would be necessary. But, in introducing the idea that, after all, central controls and bureaucratic power would be needed, he said:

"Let me make it clear that we are only taking such powers because of the appalling record of a dozen or so authorities in managing their affairs under the present system. I have every confidence that the pressures of accountability will in general deal with the problem of overspending by local councils."

He went on to say:

"The new system will be short, sharp and effective."

It has certainly been short and it has certainly been sharp, but no one in the Chamber would describe it as having been effective. The poll tax has not been effective either in its intentions or in terms of bringing to heel the desires of local people to have their own services.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): It got rid of the previous Prime Minister.

Mr. Blunkett: We must be grateful for small mercies.

On 17 March 1988, in Standing Committee E dealing with the Local Government Finance Bill—I remember it well, as will my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), because we used to sit until 2 am listening to the verbiage that poured out in favour of the poll tax, and it came as a great relief to me shortly after 17 March to enter hospital with pneumonia and have the relief of being at death's doorstep take away the necessity of sitting through the proceedings on the poll tax Bill—the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe, who was one of a number of people who were responsible for the poll tax and all its works who are still in the Prime Minister's Cabinet, said:

"Its effect is to remove from the field of selection the large majority of authorities, whose total spending is relatively

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insignificant. The community charges levied by those authorities will generally make up only a fraction of total local community charge when the precept of other authorities is taken into account. From the point of view, therefore, of protecting local charge payers, it seems unnecessary to keep such authorities in the field of charge limitation."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 17 March 1988; c. 1491.]

That is about to be overturned by the Bill.

I realise that Ministers' statements are not worth the paper that they are written on, but it is opportune to remind the right hon. and hon. Gentlemen now seated on the Government Front Bench of what their colleagues said. The simple lesson for the British people is that they should not believe a word of what is said or written by Ministers, because shortly afterwards they will change their minds. As the then Secretary of State for the Environment said in 1985, when chided about the introduction of capping after it had been made clear in the early 1980s that it would never be introduced:

"That was then, and now is now."

On Report and Third Reading on 25 April 1988, the Government had an historic opportunity to pass amendments to banding, but they did not do so. Instead, the then Minister for Local Government said:

"We have made it clear on more than one occasion that we see a capping power introduced in the clause as a reserve measure. It is not a measure to be used as a matter of course". —[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 47.]

Today, that power will be used as a matter of course. It will be applied to every authority, whatever its level of spending or circumstances.

I shall be interested to hear the Government's arguments, but there cannot be any economic justification for such a measure. Small authorities with budgets of less than £15 million do not make up a sufficient spending pattern to have any impact on the national economy, even if we accept that such local spending made a difference.

If we take all the 87 authorities spending £15 million or less that would have been affected by this year's capping criteria, the total sum involved would have reached £102 million. On 3 June 1991, the Secretary of State said that there might well be a de minimis regulation in respect of authorities that spent more than £26 above the standard spending assessment. Therefore, only 40 of those 87 authorities would have been affected. They include Conservative, Liberal and Labour-controlled authorities across the whole country that do not share attitudes of profligacy or unreasonableness or, as the Minister described it in 1988, a tendency towards irrational behaviour. Instead, they seek to provide services for their residents. They do not represent any economic disadvantage to the country as a whole.

Since 1970, the proportion of revenue spending by local government as a proportion of gross domestic product fell from 8·2 per cent. to 7·2 per cent. The capital figure is even more dramatic. Over the same 21 years, capital spending as a proportion of GDP fell from 3·6 per cent. to 1·8 per cent.—an enormous cut of 50 per cent. in the amount spent on repairing and improving our schools, housing, roads and environment. The Government can advance no economic or moral argument for their action, or justify it in other terms. It will only affect people detrimentally.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Does my hon. Friend agree with Mr. Roy Thomason, chairman of the Association of District Councils? Mr. Thomason has said:

"We appear to have a Government that is being run by the Treasury for the sake of Treasury convenience."

Mr. Blunkett: I think that the Conservative chairman of the ADC knows what he is talking about, given his experience of dealing not only with the Government but with the electorate in the area that he represents and in which he lives. *[Interruption.]* I think that the Conservative Whip is waiting for his list. "I've got a little list": 87 names would have been on it this year. The Government believe that their own supporters and elected councillors have let them down. That has happened for one simple reason. Those councillors wanted to provide services, and they wanted to spend money to maintain them.

4 pm

The Government, not the local authorities, are primarily responsible for the size, and variation in size, of bills throughout the country, and there is no doubt that the way in which the proposed council tax would protect the rich would worsen the position dramatically. Over the next two days, we shall be debating the gearing effect. That will have a drastic impact on the amount that an authority must spend to raise a single extra pound to spend on services.

In Tower Hamlets, the ratio will be 11·3:1, while in affluent south Buckinghamshire it will be only 2:1. We have tabled this amendment because of the dramatic difference between the bills that people in different areas would have to pay. The poorer the area, the more money people living there would have to find to enable an extra £1 to be spent to meet their needs.

That is silly. In such circumstances, capping is not only absurd but positively immoral; it places a much heavier burden on the most deprived areas than on the most affluent. People living in deprived inner-city areas will not only pay more but receive less. This is the new inner-city policy: take from those who have not, and ensure that the benefits go to those who have—unless, of course, the all-ages index of social need to be provided under the council tax arrangements shows Buckinghamshire to be more deprived than Tower Hamlets.

The distribution of the national business rate has also affected the position—as have the standard spending assessments, which were originally to have been varied and improved but which will now remain the same. My hon. Friends will say more about that when we discuss other amendments.

All in all, we are in a mess. The mess that the Government are making, and the Conservatives' decision to continue with capping, illustrates their bewilderment about how to deal with local government finance, their despair in not knowing which way to turn and their undoubted disdain for the need to provide decent services.

The Conservatives want capping, but without pain; centralism, but without the blame; and cuts, but not in their own pet projects or their own areas. That was made clear in the debate that took place immediately before the spring recess. It is very simple: their measures are intended to show some people that they mean business in terms of undermining public services and public spending, while also ensuring that it is the local councillors who must implement the cuts in essential provision.

This is a petty, unnecessary and anti-democratic measure. Our amendment seeks to modify it, and, at the earliest opportunity, to remove it altogether. Nothing in

this afternoon's debate will hide the fact that the Government wish to pass the buck, ignoring the consequences of their actions—the cuts, and the hurt that they intend to cause—and, once again, trying to blame local government for what is of their own making.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): I shall speak to amendments Nos. 38 and 57, tabled by the Liberal Democrats.

The proposals before us attack the heart of local democracy. The Bill is before us because the poll tax failed. We are dealing with it after, rather than before, the local elections, because, the Government would have lost 2,000 seats rather than losing nearly 1,000 at the local elections in May if these proposals had been before the local people then. We are dealing with the Bill as long as possible before a general election, because its provisions are so unpopular.

The Liberal Democrats oppose capping in principle—we want to make that clear. We want a grant equalisation system devised between the local authorities rather than devised here by central Government. Our long-term aim is to transfer the raising of local government finance to local government, with a consequent reduction in national taxation. Clearly, that cannot be done immediately, especially given that some local authorities, which are controlled by the left, would spend without limit, irrespective of people's ability to pay, while other local authorities would cut services and fail to provide the level and quality of service needed by deprived people in our communities.

The way round those problems is to make local government more accountable—the Government have often talked about doing that, but they have never achieved it. Liberal Democrats believe that local government could be made accountable by ensuring that all local authorities were fully representative of their local communities. That could be achieved only by proportional representation, so that the Lambeths and the Hackneys, and the low-spending Conservative authorities, could no longer exist.

Our two amendments would delay the Bill for a year, to take it beyond the general election. We consider that only fair, because the Government have often said that they would not cap small authorities that spend less than £15 million. They have never gone before the people to ask for their endorsement of such a policy. Another reason for wanting 12 months' delay is to enable local authorities to consider the measure and begin to plan for a worst case scenario.

If our amendments are not accepted, the worst case scenario would be that at least 88 districts would have to examine their services—refuse collection, leisure, street cleaning and so on—to see where they could considerably reduce their costs. It would be a difficult exercise because of Government policy on competitive tendering. Many local authorities have spent much of their money in giving contracts to private companies, and accepting some in-house tenders for many services. Such costs are tied up for periods of more than a year; often they are tied up for three years, and some authorities have given options for longer periods.

By introducing the Bill immediately, the Government will force local authorities into a situation where they have no room for manoeuvre because of competitive tendering, yet they will be required to make cuts in refuse collection, leisure, street cleaning and so on.

Perhaps more important is the fact that, during the next 12 months, when we are trying to get the economy of the country going, local authorities will be denied the spending opportunities that they had planned in order to create wealth in the local economy. For example, many tourist areas are trying to cater for people coming from overseas to spend money in this country, but that requires proactive marketing. The Bill will require local authorities that have planned to spend in that way to cut their proposals, thus cutting the improvements that would have benefited the local economy.

The Bill is rushed, and has not been thought through. A long list of authorities throughout the country, of all political complexions, will suffer, and people in those communities will suffer too. The least the Government can do to lessen that suffering is to agree to our amendments to delay the Bill for a year. They have made a drastic U-turn. Therefore, it is only fair for them to give the people of the country an opportunity to comment on it. Our amendments would give them that opportunity.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and I served on the Committee that considered the Community Charges (Substitute Settings) Bill at Christmas. I enjoyed myself so much that it was with a heavy heart that I thought that that was the last Committee on which we would serve for some time. But in local government, one never knows how fortune will smile on one. Since then, we have had the good fortune to be on the Committee that considered the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill. We thought that that would be the last time that we would serve on a Committee together this year, but here we are joyfully considering this Bill.

The hon. Member for Brightside began by saying that the Government should have offered immediate relief to community charge payers. I remind him that, under the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill, we offered immediate relief of £140 on the charges set by local authorities. As I recall it, the Opposition were rather scathing about that measure.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham) *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman has entered the Chamber and wishes to intervene.

Mr. Gould: I left the Chamber briefly, but have returned to listen to the Minister's first speech. As he mentioned the £140 reduction, and as he must know that many people have discovered to their consternation that they will not receive the full reduction of £140, is he yet in a position to say how many of the 38 million poll tax payers will receive the full £140?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman has been trying to whip up this storm, but it will not be whipped up. The public understand perfectly well that, if they are already receiving considerable help with their community charge, it would not be appropriate for everyone to receive the same reduction on their Bill. For example, many millions of people are paying only 20 per cent. of the community charge, yet the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) proposes that one should take £140 off the community charge bills of people who pay only £60 or £70. That seems to be an absolutely absurd point to make.

Mr. Gould: The point that I seek to make, which is keenly felt by many millions of people, is that the Government's constant proclamation that bills have been reduced by £140 is wrong. True to form in the history of the poll tax, when we inquire who gets the full benefit it is not those at the lower end of the income scale but those at the top end. All I want to know—I am sure that many others would like to hear the answer from the Minister, who surely must have some idea of it—is how many people receive the benefit that he constantly proclaims is being made available to everybody.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman's premise is incorrect. I have never claimed that everybody's bill would be reduced by £140. If the hon. Gentleman had entered the Chamber in time to hear what I was saying, he would be aware that I said £140 off the community charges that had been set by local authorities. That is a different matter. If people are not paying £140 in community charge—many people are not—it is absurd to think that they should get £140 off their community charge.

Mr. Blunkett *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: I shall not get far with this speech without interruption.

Mr. Blunkett: I cannot resist asking why that does not apply to the people of Wandsworth.

Mr. Portillo: The people of Wandsworth benefit from a Conservative administration, which set a community charge of £136. They have been uniquely disadvantaged among the people of Great Britain. Everybody else has enjoyed £140 off the community charge set by their local authority, but the people of Wandsworth have enjoyed only £136 off their community charge. The hon. Gentleman raised a delicate point—I do not know whether he intended to do so—because the people of Wandsworth have a complaint on that matter. It would be wrong to give them £4 each; zero is the appropriate figure.

The hon. Member for Brightside went through a series of quotations from Ministers—he did not quote me, but he quoted many others—saying that we hoped that we should not have to have capping. I share his disappointment that we have not been able to get by without it. I should have preferred accountability to work its way through. However, we have experience to judge from and we have seen that where local authorities did not face immediate re-election or perhaps where there were two tiers of authority and people were confused about accountability, local authorities did not face the pressure of accountability to the point where they acted responsibly in setting their charges. There has been a vast increase of 14 per cent. in local authority spending in a single year, and community charges have caused great pain to some people.

Although the Labour party has been willing to proclaim examples of people who have suffered because of high community charges—usually set by Labour authorities—it has not been willing to provide the logical answer to the problem which is that there must be some restraint on local authorities that are imposing such a burden.

4.15 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: I shall give way in a moment.

I say to the hon. Member for Brightside that the difference between his party and mine is that we, with sadness, have learnt from experience, but the Labour party has not.

Mr. Campbell: My local authority in Blyth Valley has increased its budget since 1979 by 236 per cent. I cannot understand why on earth my authority, having not spent any more money in real terms since the Government came to power, will be capped for being a spendthrift authority. Will the Minister explain that?

Mr. Portillo: I shall deal with the issue of how capping works in a moment, and I want to pick up a point made by the hon. member for Brightside, which is pertinent to the question asked by the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell). The hon. Member for Brightside said that it was our aspiration to cap all local authorities, but that is not so. We are bringing all local authorities within the legislation that governs capping, and that is very different. This year we have set out in advance the criteria under which local authorities would be capped if they set excessive budgets absolutely or if they increased their budgets successively from year to year.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: I shall give way in a moment.

The effect has been that all local authorities, with the exception of 14, have been able to set budgets that did not fall within those criteria. Of the 14 that exceeded the criteria and were therefore capped, six accepted without challenge the cap that we imposed. The remaining eight authorities challenged it. Therefore, although the legislation applied to a large number of local authorities, it was necessary to cap only a few because the others, with advance knowledge of the criteria, were able to bring their budgets into line. In the future, as we extend capping to local authorities with budgets of less than £15 million, I expect to see a similar effect. A large number of authorities could potentially be within the capping regime, but I expect that only a small number would cause us to take capping action.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Is not the Minister making a distinction without a difference? If a capping level is determined beforehand, clearly no district authority can go beyond that level because it would put itself into the most abysmal economic circumstances. In a sense, it is being asked to cap itself so the Government do not need to make use of the capping provisions. However, the authority is being capped whether it has done it itself in advance to avoid being capped or whether the Government have engaged the capping provision.

Mr. Portillo: It is true that the local authority has to exercise restraint and that it does so under the criteria that are set by the Government. However, it is extraordinary to say that it is a distinction without a difference. Most local authorities will say that the painfulness of having to make changes once a cap has been applied, and especially if they did not know the rules regarding capping in advance, is out of all comparison with the position whereby they have

a year in which to adjust their budget. They know in advance what the criteria will be so they can make sensible plans to fit in with them. I remind the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) that we are not capping any local authority below its standard spending assessment. This year, we are allowing those who came in at the SSAs a 9 per cent. increase on their previous budget. We did not regard any budget as absolutely excessive, as opposed to applying the criteria from year to year, unless it was 12·5 per cent. above the SSA.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The Minister said that the Government are not capping authorities that budget within or below the SSA. Can we take it that that is an assurance that will be given for all time and that no authority that spends below its SSA will be capped, as decreed by the Government?

Mr. Portillo: I have no intention of capping authorities below the SSA.

The hon. Members for Brightside and for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) seemed to find this extension to local authorities with budgets below £15 million puzzling. As the hon. Member for Brightside said, it is perfectly true that that does not make a huge difference in macro-economic terms. What local authorities with budgets below £15 million spend does not make much difference to the total level of public expenditure. However, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is so fixated on that point. Should not he be concerned, as I am, about the effect on individuals and on the bills that people have to pay?

One could be forgiven for thinking that the hon. Member for Eastbourne is a spokesman for local authorities and their concerns. Time and again, today and in his previous speech on the subject, he mentioned that local authorities were under attack. I never heard him talk for a moment about local people and about the need to defend local people from paying excesssive bills. That is where the Government's concern comes in. Derwentside, whose budget is below £15 million a year, has put £95 extra on people's community charge bills. That is £180 for a couple and progressively more for a larger household. Those are significant sums.

We often hear the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats complain about the burden that has been placed on people and which is difficult for them to afford. However, the burdens are caused by the authorities putting on extra amounts, such as £95 in the case of Derwentside. The crocodile tears shed by Opposition parties are not followed by a willingness to take action to protect people against having such burdens thrust on them.

We propose to introduce a council tax. The community charge, which was proposed to come in at levels that would have been broadly acceptable and which people thought were reasonable for individuals to pay, was forced up and up by a spree in local authority spending. The reason why the community charge turned out to be so much more than the Government had predicted was that local authorities chose the moment of its introduction to spend far more.

I am not prepared to see history repeat itself over the council tax. We have published the figures for what the council tax would have been for this year if it had been in operation. It is not a prediction for the future, but a statement of what would have happened this year. None the less, people will expect when we introduce the council tax that the figures that they are asked to pay will be recognisable and that they will resemble the figures for this year. This time we will oblige local authorities to increase their spending only reasonably. Those that already spend significantly above their SSAs will be obliged progressively to come down towards they so that we can deliver the council tax at figures that people will regard as reasonable and fair.

The Labour party differs with us in the extreme on this matter. It has made a great deal of its own figures—miscalculated figures, I might say. It stands to reason that if we seek to collect the same amount of money from the same number of people—*[Interruption.]*—I shall not give way to the hon. Member for Dagenham on this point because he misunderstands it again and again—the average amount will be the same. But I shall let that pass.

The important point that I want to make to the hon. Gentleman is that he has based his figures on a level of spending by local authorities which has been achieved by the Government only because we had capping powers available to us. We predicted total standard spending by local authorities this year of £39 billion and we have brought it in at £39·2 billion through the use of the threat to cap.

The hon. Member for Dagenham cannot have it both ways. He resisted the policy that made the level of spending to which I referred possible, yet he now seems to take credit for tax proposals that are based on that level of spending. More particularly for the future, he is not prepared to allow any limitation of local authority spending. The amount that local authorities spend would rise massively if there were a Labour Government intent on not capping local authorities. The bills that the hon. Member for Dagenham believes could be delivered under his rating policy could not be delivered, because local authority spending would rise through the roof.

When the council tax is introduced under this Government, with the accompaniment of the capping criteria, we shall ensure that we deliver reasonable figures. They will be brought about by the restraint that capping imposes on local authorities. That is the greatest single difference between the Government and the Labour party. We can deliver figures like those which we have proposed to the general public. The Labour party could not deliver them, because it believes that we should return to an era in which local authority spending is allowed to rip.

What an extraordinary idea it is that we should delay the extension of capping to local authorities with budgets of below £15 million. The protection that we are talking about is needed now, for the coming year. Local authorities that might be capped will want to know well in advance what the criteria are so that they can avoid being brought into the capping net. For that reason, I believe that it is right not only to introduce the extension to budgets below £15 million but to do so as quickly as possible.

Mr. Blunkett: We believe that the people of a locality should be allowed to protect themselves from this or any other Government. In other words, when people vote in local elections, they should have some chance of seeing their votes matter. If not, and if whatever people do the Government of the day believe that they must protect people from themselves, what is the point of holding local elections? Why not appoint gauleiters? We realise that the

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Secretary of State had that in mind but that the Cabinet felt that it was not appropriate to admit it before a general election. Largesse would be passed down via an elected mayor to local people and the mayor would have to do a deal with the Secretary of State, presumably over dinner in the evening. Unlike his predecessor, who was in favour of long lunches in the United States where contracts would be made, the present Secretary of State prefers dinners and wine in the evenings.

It is a pretty poor state of affairs when a Government believe that they have to protect the electorate from the electorate. It is only fair to point out that, far from becoming milder and more consensual—I said consensual, by the way—and far from believing in public service and public spending, the Government's attitude has become worse. On 25 April 1988, the Minister I quoted earlier, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), said:

"The people of an area certainly will be able to vote for a relatively high-spending authority if they so choose."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

In the debate on this Bill in June 1991, in the run-up to an election, when we are told that we have a Prime Minister who is more gentle and caring and who believes in public service, quality and spending, we have an even tighter, more bureaucratic and centralist regime in which everyone must be whipped into line. The same is true of the future.

How are the proposed council tax figures made up and what are the criteria for them? Exactly what will councils be held to? The Minister said that his outline figures, which illustrated what would have been the case this year, will be used in future. He said that councils that levy greater sums than those which have been laid down will be brought into line progressively. He should have said regressively.

Long-term capping and spending reductions, cuts in education, leisure, the environment, libraries, transport and the social services are all prefaced by the promise made by the Minister. There will be cuts to reduce the figure to the projected council tax level, which the Government dreamed up out of the blue and wrote on the back of an envelope when the chairman of the Conservative party made his amazing pronouncement on the "Today" programme on which my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) delivered the coup de grace.

Mr. Portillo: That is wrong.

Mr. Blunkett: I do not often speak French because, as the Minister says, my accent leaves something to be desired. Unlike some people, I do not spend enough time perfecting it in France. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Would the hon. Gentleman like a villa?"] I accept that offer without equivocation.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): It was Aston Villa.

Mr. Blunkett: Do not mention Aston Villa to me.

We shall not divide the Committee on the amendment, not because we do not feel strongly about it but because we know that we have to make progress. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

4.30 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 7, leave out 'which' and insert 'so far as it'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 8, leave out 'or Welsh'.

Mr. Murphy: The amendments seek to exempt Wales from the extension of poll tax capping to authorities with budgets of less than £15 million. It surprises me and my hon. Friends in Welsh constituencies that the legislation is necessary at all, because to date no Welsh local authority has been capped or is likely to be capped. The previous Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), announced on 3 April last year that he had determined principles for designating authorities for charge limitation similar to those determined for England.

On the basis of those principles, about which we never knew, the right hon. Gentleman decided not to designate any Welsh local authorities. Therefore, we never knew which Welsh local authorities might have been designated, because no one was told the principles of the criteria for capping in Wales. We thought that the present Secretary of State for Wales would change everything and would publish the capping criteria for Welsh local authorities, but on 31 October he said that he would not announce such criteria, and we are still effectively in the dark.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities said that English local authorities would be able to avoid being capped, because they know exactly what caused capping. Welsh councils are not able to do that, because they are not given any details. I sincerely hope that the Under-Secretary will give us some hint whether, as poll tax capping will apply to all Welsh authorities, the Bill will mean that we in Wales will know what the criteria are.

Until today, only a few districts in Wales—Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Rhondda—and the county councils were eligible for capping. The Bill will extend that eligibility to every one of the 37 Welsh districts, and to all the Welsh county councils. Many in Welsh local government feel that there are other reasons why no criteria for Wales have been published. We want to know why we have to follow the English example although we have not followed England in publishing criteria.

The irony is that Welsh local authorities—both district and county—have had responsible and well managed budgets. They have not overspent and they do not have anywhere near the mismanagement that would require capping. They have reacted responsibly to the Government's taunts. Over the past few years, while they have had to respond to the enormous problems created by the poll tax, they have reacted in a way that should be followed by local authorities throughout the United Kingdom, but they have had little thanks for that.

Now they are being told—to use French in my turn—that they are the betes noires of local government. That is despite their responsible behaviour and despite the tremendous jobs they have done, given the enormous financial and economic pressures under which they have had to operate. Now, they are being told that they cannot be trusted by the Government in the matter of the budgets for which they are responsible over the next couple of years.

The right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and the present Secretary of State for Wales have both said, not only on the Floor of the House and in Committee but outside in the Principality, that the relationship between Welsh local government and the Welsh Office has been exemplary. The two have worked together on the local economy, for jobs, and for the valleys initiative. None of that squares with the fact that local authorities have now slavishly to follow England and are regarded as the betes noires of local government.

There is no demand for capping from local government, electors, institutions, academics or the majority of political parties in the Principality. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) referred to the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). Day in and day out, week in and week out, my hon. Friend and I had to listen to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's arguments in favour of the poll tax and to his explanations of why it was so great. He said:

"The community charges levied by those authorities will generally make up only a fraction of the total local community charge when the precept of other authorities is taken into account. From the point of view, therefore, of protecting local charge payers, it seems unnecessary to keep such authorities in the field for charge limitation."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*; 17 March 1988, c. 1491]

There was a Welshman from Llanelli, albeit one who had gone to Folkestone, telling us that there was no need for the majority of Welsh councils to be subject to this ludicrous poll tax capping.

Wales is not demanding capping. Nor does it want the Bill. It wants an end to the poll tax in the Principality. There has been in the last couple of years an enormous outcry in the Principality about the unfairness of the poll tax, which has offended the Welsh sense of fair play.

Of particular concern to Welsh local government—because it could bring them within the criteria for poll tax capping—is the amount of money that has been spent in the Principality to set up, administer and sweeten the poll tax. Over £100 million has been deliberately wasted by the Government in that relatively small country as the Welsh Office and its Ministers tried to administer a tax that had no public support.

The tragedy of that is that, according to the Council of Welsh Districts, we could be landed with the tax not, as the Government have said, until 1993 but possibly until 1994. The reality of that is perhaps somewhat different, bearing in mind that there will not be a Conservative Government in 1994. From 1992, Labour will be in power. Meanwhile, the present plan of the Welsh Office is to extend the poll tax, and Welsh councils are reporting that it will not be possible for them to change over to the council tax in time for 1993.

We are told that the whole purpose of the legislation is to increase accountability. The consultation paper, which I assume applies to Wales as well as England, says:

"It will avoid the risk of a repeat of the substantial increase in spending which accompanied the transition to the community charge."

What increase? There was no increase in the Principality, other than what had to be spent to set up the poll tax.

The only accountability, as my hon. Friends have argued, is through the ballot box, and in May, in the one local authority in Wales which Conservative Members had argued should be capped—the capital city, Cardiff—we saw the Conservatives swept out of office. Labour won the city through the ballot box, despite the Conservatives arguing that the city council should be poll tax-capped. If ever there was a case for realising that accountability is through democratic means and not through the nonsense of poll tax capping, that was proved in the capital of Wales in the local elections last May.

Wales should be exempted from this mean Bill because in the Principality it is unwanted and unnecessary, and it will be unloved. It will do nothing to improve the accountability of Welsh local authorities or their services in education, housing, transport and social services. Nothing in the Bill will improve the quality of life of the people in the Principality. It will sour relations even more between central and local government in Wales.

The only way to achieve a revitalised Welsh local government structure is proper accountability through annual elections, a proper fair rating system and unitary all-purpose authorities. Within the next two or three years, with the return of a Labour Government, all those things will become a reality.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): This group of amendments seeks to confine the practical application of the clause to England. It would deny to the charge payers of Wales the protection afforded by the Bill to the charge payers of England.

The existing law on charge capping in section 101 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 applies equally to Wales and England. The provisions of this measure will do the same. There can be no possible justification for treating Wales and England differently. All authorities in Wales, regardless of how large or small their budgets may be, have a duty to their charge payers to exercise prudence and restraint in formulating their expenditure plans.

The Bill gives my right hon. Friend power to act in the interests of charge payers with any authority in Wales that may not budget sensibly, thereby imposing an unreasonable burden on its charge payers. My right hon. Friend did not cap any Welsh authority in 1991-92, and I hope that it will not be necessary for him to do so in future years, but he has made it clear that he will not hesitate to use his powers if he considers it necessary to do so.

4.45 pm

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) talked in mock indignation about the fury of the people of Wales. That fury is so confined that he has sitting with him on the Opposition Front Bench only one of his hon. Friends from Wales, plus one Back Bencher who has just wandered in. That is the strength of the Labour party's opposition to the clause and support for its amendments.

Mr. Murphy: How many Conservative Members are here to support the Minister?

Mr. Bennett: We are content with the Bill as it is. The hon. Gentleman has tabled amendments but few of his hon. Friends are here to support them. That says something for the bogus indignation of the Labour party on this issue.

The hon. Member for Torfaen asked about the future criteria which may be set. The Secretary of State for Wales did not announce provisional criteria for capping in advance of budget setting by authorities. For 1992-93, my right hon. Friend will wish to consult authorities on the issue in advance of an announcement on the criteria for capping which he is minded to adopt. I should make it

[Mr. Bennett]

clear that that in no way diminishes his determination to take vigorous capping action should it prove necessary to do so.

The hon. Member for Torfaen said that all authorities in Wales had been moderate. I wish that were true. The average charge set in Wales in 1991-92 was £261, a full £33 above the community charge standard spending—the CCSS—and £29 higher than that set in 1990-91. Within that, districts, including communities, set an average charge of £51, about £13 above their CCSS component; and counties set an average charge of £211, about £21 above their CCSS component.

It is clear that some authorities have not been as prudent as they might have been. It is vital that in this measure, which applies to England and Wales, we should not exempt local authorities in Wales from being prudent in future years, that community charge payers should have the protection afforded to them now, and that that should be extended to authorities with budgets of £15 million or less.

These amendments would introduce into the statutory provisions relating to charge capping an inconsistency between England and Wales when none now exists. They would deny to Welsh charge payers the comprehensive protection that the Bill seeks to provide for Wales and England alike. I urge the Committee to reject them.

Mr. Murphy: What the Minister said did not surprise me. Even so, the majority of Welsh Members do not share his view that Welsh local government is in any sense profligate. Indeed, the Secretary of State has often made play of the fact that the Welsh poll tax figures are considerably lower than those in England. That has happened not as a result of Government grant but because Welsh local authorities are good housekeepers.

There seems no reason why we should follow the English example and accept these provisions. There is no reason why we should not be inconsistent and have a rule in Wales that is different from that which applies in England. After all, the Welsh local government structure is separate, the revenue support grant is dealt with separately, and there is a separate association level in Wales which apparently has been working well.

Despite all that, the Minister tells us that threats will continue to be used against Welsh local government. It will do no good for anybody in the Principality slavishly to follow a bad English example. We have tonight an opportunity for hon. Members who represent the Principality, and others, to show clearly that the only way in which local government is accountable to its electors is through the ballot box. That is why we shall divide the Committee on this group of amendments.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—
The Committee divided: Ayes 195, Noes 264.

Division No. 162] **[4.48 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter

Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Wood and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. O'Brien: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 1, line 9, leave out from 'shall' to end and insert

'have no effect in respect of any authority to which it would otherwise be applicable where the amount calculated by it in relation to the year concerned under section 95(4) of that Act

[Mr. O'Brien]

or the aggregate amount of precepts issued by it for the year (as the case may be) is greater than the total amount in respect of that authority calculable from its Standing Spending Assessment'.

The amendment refers to the capping of local authorities that have budgets of less than £15 million and who spend below their standard spending assessment. Recently the Minister assured me that he had no intention of capping any authority that spends below its SSA. If we can rely on that assurance, there is little difference between us on the amendment, as it aims to protect from capping those authorities that spend below their budget and below their SSA.

The Rates Act 1984 provided that no authority that spent below its grant-related expenditure assessment—GREA—would be capped. Poll tax capping is carried out under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and no corresponding protection is afforded to those authorities that spend below their SSA. The protection previously given to authorities that spent below their GREA has not been offered to authorities that spend below their SSA.

Small authorities risk being capped even if they spend below their SSA, especially the crude SSA given to shire districts, which is calculated on the basis of the population and the mixed bag of services provided. The SSA, as it applies now, is a means of grant distribution, but it is an inaccurate criterion by which to assess the efficiency of the authorities. That inaccuracy is a special problem for local authorities with small budgets which are not given a specific SSA to cover a wide range of services such as allotments, cemeteries and street cleaning. Smaller authorities have a problem in trying to meet the requirements of the SSA set by the Secretary of State.

I speak from experience, because I served for 21 years on an urban district authority before the local government reorganisation of 1974. That district authority was similar in size and population to many of the district councils to which the amendment is addressed. Urban district councils undertook similar functions to those now organised under the Association of district councils. In those days there was no call for capping or any of the severe restrictions that the Government are now imposing on small authorities.

In the old days, rates were assessed on the services required and the electorate were called upon to pay those rates. The Government provided grants, as they do today, and those grants were assessed according to the needs and resources of the local authorities. There was no cause to cap any local authority. The electorate decided whether it was satisfied with the efficiency and work of its local authority. If people were not satisfied and did not appreciate the work done they could change the membership of the council. That principle still applies today, when district councils provide services to their areas.

We want the Government to preclude from capping those authorities that spend below £15 million and keep below their SSA. I am prepared to allow the Minister to intervene so that he can assure me that the amendment is acceptable. If so, there is no need to pursue the issue further. Perhaps the Minister can give me that assurance now. The Minister seems not to want to give that assurance. I should therefore like to ask what Ministers intend to do about the principle of capping in general in 1992. The criteria likely to be announced later this year will have a significant effect on the application of capping to local authorities.

Will the Government undertake not to cap any authority spending below its SSA? I know that the Minister has given me an assurance on that, but we must bear in mind the fact that the Government are introducing the principle of year-on-year expenditure, which could have some effect on the capping procedure. Will the Government assure me that under no circumstances will local authorities that spend below £15 million or which do not exceed their SSAs—set by the Government—be capped?

Will the Minister clarify how far down the expenditure scale of local authorities the Government are prepared to go? I referred earlier to the smaller urban district authorities that were in being before the reorganisation of 1974. Many of them are now town councils with certain functions in line with those of the former parish councils. They, too, have budgets. What are the Government's intentions towards those budgets? May I take it that they will not be included in any capping procedure that the Government may apply?

I remind the Minister that, a few days ago when we were discussing local government in a Statutory Instrument Committee, he advised the Committee of his passion and love for local government—emotions which I hope will come to the fore today. If the Minister is sincere he will support this amendment because it protects smaller authorities from the capping rule that the Government want to extend right down to smaller local authorities.

The Government argue that stronger capping powers are necessary to protect charge payers from excessive spending by local authorities. The Secretary of State said as much when we discussed the extended powers that the Government want to take. The Association of District Councils, which covers these smaller authorities, contends that capping powers are wholly unnecessary and that in practice capping makes true local accountability for local authorities' spending decisions impossible. Authorities with small populations and small budgets cannot be made accountable through the ballot box under capping of the nature proposed by the Government.

The ADC asks vice-presidents—there are quite a few of them among Conservative Members—to oppose the proposals in the Bill under which the Government seek powers to cap small authorities. Hon. Members should take the ADC's request seriously.

5.15 pm

I remind the House that the Secretary of State for the Environment already has powers to cap authorities whose spending or whose increases in spending he considers excessive. Those powers are contained in part VII of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. However, the provisions of that Act also ensure that authorities whose spending is below £35 million, as the Secretary of State may specify, are not subject to the possibility of capping.

When we discussed this matter in the Committee that considered the 1988 Act, it was established that, if a council had a budget of only £15 million, capping would not take place. Indeed, the ceiling was set more than twice as high—the Secretary of State of the time said that he would reflect seriously before capping local authorities with budgets of below £35 million. If the Secretary of State's promises were sincere and if the speeches of

Members who served on the Committee in 1988 were sincere, why are we here again tonight defending local government against the capping of budgets below £15 million? The limit below which charge capping should not apply was originally introduced in recognition of the fact that authorities spending below that level did not contribute significantly to spending beyond the Government's targets for local government. That was agreed in Committee in 1988, when the Minister felt that there was no cause to cap authorities with budgets below £15 million—or even as high as £35 million.

Why the need to reverse the decision taken in 1988?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman has stated that the Government are concerned about the total level of local authority expenditure—and they certainly are. Does the Labour party have a view on whether total spending by local authorities should be controlled——

The Chairman: Order. That will have to wait for another debate; it is not in order on this one.

Mr. Marlow: With respect, Mr. Walker, we are talking about charge capping——

The Chairman: Order. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman do me the courtesy of reading the amendment and then reflecting on whether he has grounds for his intervention.

Mr. O'Brien: I was making the point that the Government are going against the spirit of the 1988 Act with regard to smaller local authorities, and I should like to know why. The statement of excessiveness is largely related to a comparison of actual spending with the Government's SSA. That is why we include that in the amendment. The SSAs are made on a national formula which, as Ministers accepted in Committee in 1988, cannot be sufficiently finely tuned to reflect the spending needs of low-spending authorities. Therefore, we want to know why the Government want to change the spirit of the 1988 Act. I hope that the Minister will say why local authorities whose budgets are below £15 million should be caught in the capping process.

I have asked the Minister to clarify how far down the scale the Government intend to go with capping powers. Is there a cut-off point? Is there a limit to how far the Government are prepared to go? Town and parish councils with a budget below £15 million need to know why they will be caught in the capping net. There is nothing in the legislation that says where that cut-off point will be.

Many local authorities will have difficulty meeting the requirements of the Government and the guidelines set down by the Department of the Environment, because of the lower spending base that could operate if the SSAs are not set in line with the needs of the local authorities. That is more important to local authorities whose spending powers are below £15 million, because they have statutory responsibilities and obligations. Low-spending authorities could have difficulty meeting those commitments if we are not prepared to give some guidance, assurance and protection to the local authorities.

In the preparation of the 1988 Act, the Government acknowledged the problems that I have described and that is why they introduced the £15 million lower limit for charge capping. They also accepted that the limit may need increasing and that is why we have the £35 million ceiling. That point was accepted by the House, which granted the Secretary of State the power to more than double the limit set by local authorities before charge capping applied.

Therefore, the amendment is important if we are to treat fairly district councils with low expenditure. The range of limits that will be set by the application of the Bill to smaller local authorities could have some significance to the services provided by those authorities. I hope that the Minister will address the points that I have made and answer my questions, so that we can see what is in the Government's mind.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Clause 1 ploughs on with the poll tax. Despite everything that has happened recently—the changes in the Conservative party and the local election results—we are still going down the same path. If there is any reason to distrust the new face of the Government, it is this measure.

The amendment deals with SSAs, and many district councils will have difficulty in moving below the SSA levels. Districts in shire counties are particularly disadvantaged under the SSAs compared even with shire counties and metropolitan districts. However, I grant that the latter have been badly hit by the poll tax legislation.

The booklet on the background and underlying methodology of the SSA published in 1990 by the Department of the Environment's local government finance policy directorate sets out the criteria under which the SSA operates. It points out that SSAs are simpler than grant-related expenditure assessments, because they have reduced the categories of assessment from 63 to 13.

For districts in shire areas, that number of categories is even more dramatically reduced. The 13 categories include education, personal social services, police, fire and civil defence, highway maintenance and so on, and tend to include all other services and capital financing in two general catch-all categories. That concerns the district authorities. If there is something wrong with those limited areas of assessment, the district authorities are placed in considerable difficulty.

As far as those difficulties affect the counties, they are to some extent overcome by the SSA provision in areas that are mentioned. The counties can operate their accounts in such a way that they get by, although they are getting by badly.

Therefore, the anomalies in the SSAs hit district authorities worse than other authorities, especially in shire areas. The problem of the SSA structure can be seen in the district authority that covers most of my constituency in north-east Derbyshire. Will the precepts issued by the parish councils which are outside district control be excluded from the assessment? If not, we are in even greater difficulties.

North-East Derbyshire has a budget this year of £7·3 million, which is £1·5 million, or 27 per cent., in excess of the Government's SSA. Under the Government's chop logic, its council must be one of the most profligate in England. That is nonsense. Independent judgments and the reports of the Audit Commission show it to be an efficient and well-run local authority. By putting services out to tender, it operates in the same way as other authorities, and it also has an efficient and well-run direct labour force.

However, North-East Derbyshire comes bottom of any league table, and it is starved of grants because of the SSA formula. Its SSA per poll tax payer is the lowest of 26

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

comparable authorities identified by the Audit Commission. It has an SSA of £60·30 per head, which is nearly half that enjoyed by Derby, at £150·37—yet that authority is badly treated under the SSA arrangements. A table that formed part of a parliamentary answer that I received on 5 December 1990 showed that Derby was in the bottom half of the league table of revenue support grant in respect of SSA estimates. Derby is in a terrible situation, yet North-East Derbyshire is considerably worse off, receiving nearly half the amount that Derby does per charge payer.

5.30 pm

In the table to which I referred, North-East Derbyshire was placed 346 out of 366 for English authorities. Worse still, only one council has a lower SSA per poll tax payer, and that is East Dorset. I know that someone has to finish bottom of any league table, and that does not necessarily tell against the Government's position. However, it indicates that the Government think that North-East Derbyshire, in common with East Dorset, is a kind of ideal authority that can manage on almost no grant, and by raising only a limited amount of funding.

However, East Dorset's difference from North-East Derbyshire is emphasised by its political control. East Dorset is represented by the hon. Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), with a Conservative majority of 22,000, and for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), with a majority of more than 12,000—whereas North-East Derbyshire is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and myself. It is a traditionally solid Labour area, and one that has been seriously affected by the decline in the railways and mining, and, in neighbouring Rotherham, in the steel industry.

It may be that East Dorset does not need much grant—though the hon. Member for Christchurch might argue otherwise. But North-East Derbyshire does, and in the absence of that revenue, the only way that it can maintain its services—many of which are statutory—is by increasing its poll tax. It then places itself at risk of being capped according to the provisions of the Bill.

Why does North-East Derbyshire have such a small SSA and grant per taxpayer? It can only be because the formula is crazy, does not fit North-East Derbyshire's needs, and has insufficient flexibility to take account of the area's characteristics.

After allowing for debt charges, interest receipts, and so on, district authorities in shire areas must consider three main criteria in calculating their SSA. Those characteristics, and the weightings that are applied to them, crucify authorities such as North-East Derbyshire and others that have been criticised by Members of the Government Front Bench, such as Derwentshire.

One consideration is population and the net outflow during the day. North-East Derbyshire loses a considerable number of its population during the day to Sheffield, Chesterfield and pits in Chesterfield and Bolsover. Other towns gain from overnight visitors, particularly in seaside areas, but nothing like that occurs in North-East Derbyshire. That movement out of North-East Derbyshire must have an adverse effect on its weightings.

Ward density and ward sparsity is another consideration. A thinly populated area may qualify for extra grant, as may a densely populated one. The logic of that is reflected in services such as refuse collection and dispersal, when vehicles may either be clogged up in the traffic or have to travel great distances. However, North-East Derbyshire, together with Amber Valley, receives less grant than any comparable authority—£14 per poll tax payer, compared with £30 for Darlington.

North-East Derbyshire takes the form of a large C-shape surrounding Chesterfield. It is an intricate mixture of densely populated and sparsely populated areas, which together present problems of the kind that I mentioned—yet it fails to qualify under the appropriate criteria. It loses out considerably because it does not match up to the ward figures, and so receives a combined amount less than that which almost any other area receives.

If North-East Derbyshire is an ideal authority, its shape must also be ideal. However, if one could stretch out its C-shape in some way, it would be 30 miles long and in many places three miles wide. Its district council offices are in Chesterfield, so it is not spread out: it is like the hub of a bicycle wheel from which spokes radiate. People have to move in and out of that area continually to use the services that it provides. The SSA arrangements do not take account of that.

The third set of social characteristics is represented by the social index, which deals with such matters as the number of houses with no bath or WC, the number of lone-parent families and the number of households in which there is more than one person inhabiting a room. In a host of cases North-East Derbyshire fails to qualify for help, because it is divided into two areas that follow two entirely different patterns. The east is solidly working class, while the west is middle class—although there are, of course, pockets of cross-class occupation.

North-East Derbyshire, then, is sorely penalised in each of those three respects. For as long as we continue to experience the absurdities of the poll-tax regime, we shall need a formula that takes such problems into account. Unless parish moneys were excluded, it would be difficult for North-East Derbyshire to feature on the list of authorities that fall below SSA levels; but it should be possible for district authorities to do so.

Such matters have already been discussed when deputations from North-East Derbyshire have met the Minister, but he has just sent me a letter saying that there is to be no argument about this issue. I have therefore had no option but to raise the matter in the House. I hope, however, that there will be a further deputation, because the lessons of North-East Derbyshire have wider applications. I am sure that many other hon. Members could talk about the effect of SSAs on the areas that they represent.

Like many other district authorities, North-East Derbyshire is obliged to provide a range of statutory services, and it has little room for cuts. If it is operating not profligately but efficiently, in Audit Commission terms, it will have no leeway after spending the necessary amounts on electoral registration, refuse collection, environmental health services, street cleaning, town and country planning, poll tax rebates and the administration of the poll tax system.

If it is to make cuts, therefore, the authority must cut other services. Spending on other services accounts for £2·5 million. If its expenditure proves to be £1·5 million above SSA, North-East Derbyshire will be expected to destroy hosts of services. It will be forced to slash its contributions to the county's concessionary fares policy

—thus either ending or severely damaging its operation —and to trading services, cemeteries and crematoria, swimming pools, sports centres, parks and open spaces. Retaining the facilities themselves would involve fantastic loan charges.

If North-East Derbyshire is to live within the limits dictated by what the Government consider that its means should be, it will have to cut many services by 50 per cent. or more. That is idiotic. North-East Derbyshire is no island; it is by no means unique. It is similar to many other authorities throughout the country, many of them Labour. The SSA formula has been manipulated to the disadvantage of North-East Derbyshire.

5.45 pm

According to the booklet that I mentioned earlier, the SSA procedure was intended to be simple and easily understood; the principle of accountability was intended to operate. If I had had more time, I would have read out one of the sections in the booklet, which describes the structure and operation of the system—although no one, including me, would have understood.

The booklet has a lot to say about judgmental considerations. It even applies such considerations to sparsity of population. Those "judgmental considerations", however, are sheer guesswork, and in many of the Government's calculations the guesswork has gone wrong. It is time that the Government started to pull back, instead of continuing to plough the same furrow and producing more and more unjust poll tax legislation.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I suspect that the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who moved the amendment, did not want to take yes for an answer. I expect my hon. Friend the Minister to have little difficulty in accepting the spirit, if not the wording, of this amendment: I cannot believe that the Government intend to cap an authority that does not exceed its SSA.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Latham: I will, although I think that it is up to my hon. Friend the Minister to answer.

Mr. O'Brien: I told the Minister at the beginning of my speech that, if he agreed with the content of the amendment, I would leave it at that. He declined to accept my invitation, so I must pursue the matter.

Mr. Latham: I am sorry if I appeared to criticise the hon. Gentleman; I certainly did not intend to do so. My hon. Friend, however, will make his own speech, and will want to make his own points rather than simply intervening in the hon. Gentleman's speech. Indeed, he is now indicating as much.

Following what was said by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), let me make it clear that for me this is not a party political matter. My constituency contains three local authorities, none of them Labour: some councillors are Independent, some SLD, and most—I am glad to say—Conservative.

Nevertheless, I am slightly worried about the position of Rutland district council—and, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, so is the council. I do not think that there will be any problem provided that the authority keeps within its SSA, as indeed, it has done ever since the introduction of the system. I fear, however, that in such a small authority a tiny amount of spending could be enough to exceed the SSA. *[Interruption.]* I do not know why Opposition Members are so excited about that; I should have thought that it was obvious.

I know that my hon. Friend received a deputation of small local authorities the other day. I believe that it was led by Beverley borough council, with which Rutland has been associated. The deputation presented my hon. Friend with a strong case, in writing, which I know he is taking seriously. I am sure that he will continue to do so when drawing up the SSA formula for the coming year.

I am happy to accept the Government's assurance. I appreciate that they do not want any local authority to exceed its SSA, thus imposing a burden on its charge payers. Although in principle I regret the introduction of Bills of this nature—and I believe that the Government do as well—I recognise that there may be strong reasons for it. I merely ask my hon. Friend for an assurance that he is thinking carefully about the case put to him by Beverley, Rutland and other small district councils, and that he will respond constructively.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I assure the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) that of course the Minister will listen; of course he will consider his case. But after all that the answer will be that he gets nothing. It is as simple as that.

The Bill represents a further erosion of democracy and local government. To use a fishing analogy, the Government are closing the mesh on their nets. They have caught the whale and the shark; now they are after the minnow. They have carried on in that way since 1979 and now they are turning on the small authorities simply because of their ideological preference for central Government as against local government. They will not save much money, but it is the principle of the thing that is important. They are after the small authorities.

Ministers may say that, if the small authorities are getting away with it, the large authorities will follow their example. The Government are not exactly running scared —they have not been scared of anything yet, because they have dismissed every logical argument ever put to them in their pursuit of the destruction of democracy in local government.

I shall use my own local authority as a marker. For generations, Barnsley council went about its business lawfully and supplied services, as many small authorities will have done. But then came charge capping.

We have never had a quarrel with central Government about what central Government should spend—differences, perhaps, but never a quarrel. It is for central Government to determine what grant local government receives. Our quarrel is not with that principle but with the idea that central Government should determine how a local authority can spend money on behalf of the electorate who voted it into power.

The Secretary of State and his Ministers argue that they are acting on behalf of the people, but they have never consulted the people on the subject. It is four years since they consulted the people, so they have no authority to say that they are acting on their behalf.

Small authorities, however, consult the people. My local authority consults the people year in, year out. Every year it consults the electorate for permission to spend the money it wants and to provide the services it wants.

What has happened to Barnsley will happen to the smaller authorities now, too. First, we lost a music centre

[Mr. Allen McKay]

—36 musicians have been dismissed and one of the finest music centres in Britain has gone out of business. Secondly, only this week I found out that, as a result of the authority's having been capped, no further education is being offered to people in our school areas. Dancing classes, language classes and soft furnishing classes, all for aged people, have gone. One hundred and thirty-six elements of further education have had to go, purely because of poll tax capping. That is taking ideology to extremes.

What is being done is destroying the very things that local people wanted, that local government could supply, and that central Government will not supply. There is the ridiculous example of the Sheffield supertram. That was something that the Government wanted, but which under the spending criteria the authorities were unable to supply. Central Government gave money to local government to finance the supertram. The four authorities said, "Fine. We will act as your agent and organise the supertram." But then central Government said, "Wait a minute. If you spend the money that we give you, you will have to cut your services even further." So the supertram became a non-runner. Small authorities will soon come up against such problems, too.

All that we want from central Government is some common sense, rather than an ideological commitment to the pursuit of a vendetta against local authorities, large and small.

I know that the Minister of State has said that he will see representatives of the authorities concerned. I am sure that he will see them, but with all due respect to him—I would see him at any time, because I like discussing the situation with him, even though we disagree—it is the Secretary of State whom we wish to see. I had a letter telling me that the Secretary of State's diary was full—I should hope that it is full; otherwise, the right hon. Gentleman would not be doing his job. But I shall write back and say that, although we accept that his diary is full, we are willing to wait. The Government could give us the first available date—it could be a Saturday or a Sunday or any other day of the week. The Secretary of State should be able to find at least one hour of his time to consider and discuss the authorities' problems with their representatives.

For years we have been trying to get through to Ministers and Secretaries of State the concerns of local government. Of course, there are issues on which we differ and others on which we can agree, but we can never agree with the way in which central Government are treating local government and local democracy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who, we would all agree, is one of the most reasonable men in the House. We listen to him with particular care and attention. But first I must return to the beginning of the debate and the opening speech of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien).

I reiterate what my hon. Friend the Minister of State said: we have no intention of capping local authorities that set budgets below their standard spending assessments. The hon. Member for Normanton said that I had a love and passion for local government. I plead guilty to that. Perhaps it is because I want to make it work, but I shall return to that later. My love and passion do not extend quite as far as that of Alan Bleasdale in "GBH", which I am sure the hon. Gentleman enjoys watching as much as I do.

When rate capping was introduced, we made it clear that the exemption reflected the relatively low expenditure incurred by the authorities concerned, and hence its relatively small effect on total local government spending. At that time, we were determined to concentrate our efforts on the worst overspenders and we believed that the effect on local taxation of such district spending decisions would be small. The hon. Member for Normanton asked what had changed since. The answer is that time has moved on and some authorities with budgets below £15 million have greatly burdened their charge payers. This year there have been about 40 examples of authorities budgeting below £15 million overspending their SSAs by more than £26 per adult, which translates directly into an increase of £26 or more in the charge.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): My hon. Friend will appreciate that my local authority of Pendle could be affected by the measure and that it regards its SSA as unsatisfactory. I have made a number of representations to that effect to my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues. Will my hon. Friend give detailed criteria for the factors that would influence his Department in deciding whether to cap a local authority such as Pendle? I fully understand if he would prefer to write to me rather than to reply immediately. Will he also consider visiting Pendle—perhaps during the recess?

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend makes a tempting offer. I may say that his untiring efforts have had a significant effect on the Government's thinking about local authority finance in the past year and more and I hope that that will be able to continue. I ask my hon. Friend to be patient until we make announcements about the next round of SSAs, at which point we shall be in a position to meet his local authority, if it so wishes, and to listen to its concerns about the SSA methodology and how it may be affected. But I suspect that with regard to this Bill the authority need have no fear. It is unlikely that a sensible and prudent local authority which is not spending above its SSA will be caught by the Bill.

6 pm

As I said, time has moved on. We are determined that the substantial extra sums that we are making available to local authorities from this year onwards should be used to keep charges down and not to boost spending further. We recognise changed circumstances and we have taken prompt action, in line with our duty to protect charge payers, to address the realities of the situation. The means of achieving our goals may have had to change because of the actions of some local authorities, but the goal remains the same—a local tax at acceptable levels.

The hon. Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) asked about parishes. The cost of providing parish services is included in the districts' SSAs, but parishes themselves fall outside the capping regime. However, as parish precepts do not form part of the calculation that authorities are required to make, under the terms of section 95 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, in setting their demand on the collection fund for the year, such precepts cannot,

under the terms of the statute, be considered by the Secretary of State in relation to his capping powers. Parish expenditure cannot, therefore, bring a district into capping. I am happy to be able to give hon. Members that assurance.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister will recall that a few months ago I raised the question of parish councils and referred to Wentworth parish council in my constituency. I said that the Government had been remarkably remiss in not referring to the position of parishes and parish councils. At that point, the Minister intervened to say that he would be speaking to them at an early date. Does he realise that what he has just said will bring parish councils no great joy and will prolong the real anxiety felt by responsible parish councils—the vast majority are absolutely responsible, as I am sure the Minister will confirm? They will find his comments most unhelpful and not at all encouraging.

Mr. Key: I am delighted to be able to reassure the hon. Gentleman. Only yesterday, my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities met representatives of the National Association of Local Councils, who raised no particular difficulties in that respect. I ask the hon. Gentleman to read what I have said—and, indeed, what I am about to say as I have not quite finished my remarks about councils. I should add that I recall with pleasure my visit to his constituency and to Wentworth.

Mr. O'Brien: This is an important issue. Is the Minister saying that parish precepts will not influence the SSAs and capping levels of district councils? Can he confirm that precepts set by parishes will be held separately from the expenditure of district councils?

Mr. Key: Parishes are included within SSAs but, as I said, parish expenditure cannot bring a district into capping. The capping regime bites on the demand made by the district on the collection fund, regardless of the level of precept levied by parishes on the authority.

Mr. O'Brien: I repeat that this is an important matter. We are talking about district councils' expenditure. Are parish council precepts included in that. The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities is shaking his head, so presumably they are not included. If he is not, his head must have been shaken by the power.

I want to be clear that the precept for parish councils will not be included in district councils' total expenditure. Is that correct?

Mr. Key: I have already tried to explain the position, and I shall continue to try to do so. It has been argued that it is unfair to include parish expenditure in districts' SSAs but not in their budgets, as that treats authorities which have a large number of parishes in their area more favourably than those which do not. The Secretary of State recognised that, in very marginal cases, an authority might avoid designation through certain of its functions being performed by parishes, and that authorities might devolve functions to provide themselves with greater headroom against their SSA. I should point out that parish expenditure accounts for only a very small proportion of local authority spending, and the Secretary of State did not consider that the issues were likely to be of sufficient magnitude to justify any special provision.

The short answer, then, is that parish expenditure cannot bring a district into capping, and the capping regime bites on the demand made by the district on the collection fund regardless of the level of precept levied by the parishes on the authority.

Mr. O'Brien: I must press the Minister on this important point. We are talking not only about parishes in the non-metropolitan district areas. The arrangements must also presumably apply to parish and town councils in the metropolitan districts. The principle is exactly the same. Ryedale district council's SSA was £6·21 million. Do I take it that any parishes that precepted upon that council could not influence the level of SSA?

Mr. Key: The parishes precept not on the council but on the collection fund. In setting SSAs, district and parish spending are considered together, but capping bites only on the district's demand on the collection fund. That is the important point. I acknowledge that this is an important question and, if I discover that I have said anything that is not correct, I shall leap into print with a letter to the hon. Gentleman.

The amendment would maintain the exemption from capping of authorities in England and Wales setting budgets of £15 million or less for those authorities which set budgets above their standard spending assessments. It is difficult to understand the rationale behind it. That is why I could not help the Opposition by leaping to my feet at an early stage during the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Normanton to say that I agreed with the proposal.

Whatever the hon. Gentleman's precise intention in tabling the amendment, this is clearly another example of the way in which the Opposition have no compunction about exposing charge payers to the effects of overspending by local authorities. There will always be a temptation to spend upwards. Even small authorities with small budgets will be tempted to spend upwards, especially in view of the settlement announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget last March. It is precisely the authorities that set their budgets over SSA that indulge in the kind of overspending that we seek powers to restrain. The vast majority of the small authorities are not included. Capping has worked to the extent that such authorities have trimmed their budgets accordingly. Only 86 of the 267 local authorities with budgets of under £15 million were spending over their SSAs. I believe that those authorities would not have sought to budget over their SSAs—and over £15 million —if they thought that capping was in prospect.

Come what may, authorities budgeting at or below SSA have nothing to fear from the provisions of the Bill. They are budgeting prudently and sensibly and their charge payers receive a fair deal. It is the other authorities—the authorities spending well above SSA—from which the charge payer needs protection. We are not talking about small sums. About 40 authorities set budgets which added £26 or more to the bills met by their charge payers. In some cases, the effect was very much more significant. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned a few examples on Second Reading, pointing out that Derwentside had cost its charge payers an additional £95, Harlow £83, Elmbridge £73 and Watford £56.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East spoke of the criteria for standard spending assessments. The

[Mr. Key]

average increase in standard spending assessments for shire districts in 1991-92 is 28·3 per cent. The increase in total SSAs is 19·4 per cent. North-East Derbyshire's SSA increased 26·2 per cent., in line roughly with the SSAs for other Derbyshire districts.

Each year, we consult the local authority associations about standard spending assessments. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities believes that there is nothing new to be said or heard. When, just before Christmas, we announce our intended SSAs for the following year, we listen to delegations and to the views of Members of Parliament and councillors. It is interesting to note how many district councils are spending money on functions for which the counties are financed under the SSAs—and then districts wonder why we are slightly doubtful about their spending policies.

Mr. Bellotti: Will the Minister bear in mind the Audit Commission's family of local authorities, which takes into account 49 different factors? There is a vast difference in the SSAs of local authorities in the same families.

Mr. Key: That does not surprise me. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) can be reassured that we constantly consider the families of local authorities. It does not surprise me that there are great differences within the families on the indicators for SSAs. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East laughs, but statistically the methodology of SSAs is sophisticated. However, it is much simpler than the old grant-related expenditure assessment system. Sitting in the centre of the bicycle wheel, about which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East told us, it is interesting that local authorities queue up to tell us that their figures are unfair and that all the authorities around them are overpaid. That is the nature of the beast, I fear.

Mr. Hardy: I shall not labour the point, but an element in the determination of standard spending assessments is the 1981 census. The Minister referred to his visit to my constituency—I am delighted that he enjoyed that and we should be pleased to see him again—but the devastation that he saw has occurred since the 1981 census. The economic condition of my area is based on that assessment rather than on the current position. That makes the SSA for the area quite absurd.

Mr. Key: I well recall that memorable day when I was able to announce Government support of more than £20 million for local authorities in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. How I should like to be able to repeat that on my visits to his constituency.

I am sure the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is aware that another census has just been taken. Once the figures have been analysed and are available to us, it will make a substantial difference.

It is important to recognise that the Labour party has never suggested that it will replace the system of SSAs. Will it replace that system?

Mr. O'Brien: Yes.

Mr. Key: If the Labour party is committed to replacing SSAs with a grant mechanism, it should tell us and, more important, local authorities exactly what it has in mind, because there has been a deafening silence so far.

Mr. O'Brien: If the Minister reads *Hansard*, he will find that on Second Reading my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) explained our policy no fewer than three times. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not read *Hansard*, which clearly shows all the options.

6.15 pm

Mr. Key: Our SSA reports are copious—I recall that there are almost 100 pages—but I do not think the detail given in the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham was quite as clear as that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) mentioned Rutland authority. I acknowledge the contribution that it, Beverley and several other small authorities have made in their serious critique of the methodology of SSAs as they affect small rural authorities. I enjoyed my discussion with officers and councillors from those authorities and I assure my hon. Friend that we are carefully considering the substantial work that was done. I look forward to the results of that work, to which I shall respond in due course. I have much enthusiasm for the methodology of SSAs; I am never sure why, but I find it compelling. I should be sorry if a Labour Government did away with them.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone mentioned the Sheffield supertram. As he knows, we are holding discussions on that and more meetings are planned. I look forward to resolution of the problems. As discussions are being held, it would be unwise for me to say more tonight.

There is no question of the destruction of democracy. I am not scared about that, but if I am scared about anything it is about parts of our country where local democracy is not thriving. I sometimes worry about the future of local democracy.

Mr. Blunkett: I worry all the time.

Mr. Key: The hon. Member for Brightside worries all the time. I hope that he does not, because he is a cheerful fellow; I hate to think of him worrying all the time.

There is a problem in some of our great cities, but it should not be addressed on a party political basis, because it is a problem of democracy. Opposition Members may agree that when one visits a city area one increasingly meets people who say that they are the real representatives of the community. They say, "Don't listen to him; I really know what the people think." There is much diversity among the people who queue up to say that they represent communities, but what they have in common is that most of them are not elected councillors. That is a real problem for democracy.

The amendment would not only reduce but, in practice, eliminate the purpose of the provisions of clause 1. Once again, that shows that the Opposition are more interested in pandering to the interests of their friends in local government than in protecting charge payers, and I call on the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. O'Brien: The purpose of the amendment is to prevent authorities that spend less than £15 million and below their SSAs from being capped. The Minister assured us that the Government do not intend to cap such authorities, but we have often heard that from Ministers in Committee. Local authorities, especially Rutland, that spend 10p, 15p or 20p per week too much per charge payer

may be capped. It is now getting so ridiculous that there must be some protection for local authorities, which is why we have tabled the amendment.

The Minister said that there would be a precept on the collection fund with regard to parish and town councils. I remind Conservative Members that the same was said about the police, about the fire service and about public transport, but they are all subject to capping. If we are to have assurances that there will be no further approach to capping for parish and town councils, it is imperative that the amendment is accepted to protect authorities such as Rutland. A very small increase in expenditure could put such authorities into the capping criteria. That is very dangerous for local authorities and for democracy within those authorities.

Mr. Latham: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he must not take that line. He has tabled an amendment and asked for an assurance, which he has been given. He should withdraw the amendment.

Mr. O'Brien: We have had so many assurances. We referred to those given during the debate on the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which are being overturned tonight. Therefore, the assurance that the Minister is now giving us does not impress us one bit. If Conservative Members are interested in their local authorities and want to protect them, they must support the amendment. Because we are concerned about the future and the protection of local authorities, we will press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 209, Noes 286.

Division No. 163] **[6.20 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ken Eastham

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry

Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M Taylor and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Mr. Blunkett: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 1, line 9, at end insert

'after the making of an Order under subsection (4) below'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 18, in page 1, line 10, after 'above', insert

'and after the making of an Order under subsection (4) below'.

No. 21, in page 1, line 19, at end insert

'(4) the Secretary of State may make an Order to give effect to the provisions of subsections (1) and (2) above after he has laid before Parliament a statement specifying that the calculation of the amount of £15 million referred to in section 101(1) of the 1988 Act does not in respect of any authority include any revenue expenditure arising in connection with a project all or part of whose capital cost is funded by the European Community.'.

Mr. Blunkett: I want to take up the issues that we left at the end of our debate on the previous group of amendments which relate to the effect that expenditure has on the capping criteria, its relationship to the SSA and the question of money that is returned to us from the European Community in the form of grants and allocations for specific projects.

At the end of our previous debate, there were some interesting exchanges between the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) about the way in which the collection fund, the draw-down and precepting related to capping. We look forward to the Minister's reply with some interest because the Opposition and local authority treasurers believe strongly that precepting on the collection fund has an effect on the amount that the major collecting authority can draw down without itself being subject to capping.

That also relates to the level of expenditure that is counted by the main spending authority before it runs into difficulties with the Government's criteria. There is no better example of that than the farce that relates to the expenditure of moneys that have been returned to us from the Commission in Brussels. I use the words "returned to us", because, as hon. Members know, the amount that we contribute varies from time to time. It will vary in the coming year by doubling to more than £2 billion.

Some of that money is due back to local authorities in a variety of schemes, such as RECHAR. As hon. Members know, authorities spending that money immediately find themselves disqualified by the Government from taking up other forms of national aid or capital expenditure permissions to enable them to continue their normal programmes on capital. The system works in a ridiculous way. Money from Europe, whether RECHAR or a range of other schemes—RECHAR is a particular example because it was never intended to be counted as part of the capital programme—results in authorities having to cut their capital programme to be able to accept resources that have been allocated from Europe. Their basic credit approvals are not increased—in other words, they are not shown to be additional in terms of the extra help—so local authorities have to make cuts. That has always applied under the present Government. The additionality rules have been ridiculed because of their impact and because this country has a lower level of expenditure on capital than our European Community partners have. They do not apply the same additionality rules.

However, as a result of capping, revenue expenditure is treated in the same way, so that when capital allocations are made by the European Community the revenue that backs it up to provide for the debt charges and, in some cases, the running costs of projects approved for EC aid is counted for capping purposes. The authority is forced to cut its normal mainstream budget in order to accept our money back from our European partners. A dafter position one could never expect to come across. Without capping, the position would not arise. *[Interruption]*

I hear that the Whip is doing his bit again going round the houses drawing up his little lists. Perhaps he would draw up the list of authorities that have been denied help by the rules that currently apply. Perhaps he would whip in some of his colleagues so that they can hear about the way in which their people—not their local authorities—are affected. *[Interruption.]* I welcome the Secretary of State to the Chamber to hear about the absurdity of inner-city areas—which he offers to help through the city challenge scheme—being unable to take up European help as a result of his capping proposals.

The urban programme included a disregard in respect of capping. Our amendment seeks to extend a disregard for capping purposes to all similar resources from Europe. The disregard should apply equally to all other sources, including central Government. In the debate on the previous group of amendments we were discussing precepts, outside draw-downs on collection funds and amounts paid to an authority from elsewhere but which nevertheless count for year-on-year increases in expenditure. Those amounts should be set aside for capping purposes. If not, every amount that is allocated, for example for critical training programmes, from European moneys will be counted for year-on-year expenditure by local authorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) described the position on the scheme for the South Yorkshire supertram rapid transit system. Even though central Government have agreed to aid the scheme through the Department of Transport, the scheme falls foul of the rules. The local authorities, which are part of the passenger transport authority, are subject to the capping criteria in respect of the activities of the passenger transport authority. I underline that fact for the sake of the Minister who will reply to the debate. The local authorities find themselves cutting their mainstream essential services in order to take up the allocation of funds from a Government Department. Exactly the same thing happens when funds are allocated from Europe.

The additionality rules should be changed for capital expenditure and the impact of the revenue consequences should be disregarded for capping purposes. It is simple. If someone offers one some money, should one be penalised for spending it? Let us use the analogy of the family budget, which in the early days the former Prime Minister used to use. Someone comes along and offers the family some extra cash from outside, money which the family gave to the person to help him along in the past. That is what we do by contributing to the European Community.

The person says, "You are on hard times. You have been recognised as a deserving case." Of course, under the Government's criteria, only deserving cases can receive EC help. The person says, "I want to give you back some of the money that you gave me last year." The family has to say, "We are terribly sorry. We would love to take it and we realise that it would help us to pay for the extension that we managed to build with the capital that you gave us last year. We would love to be able to heat and light it and let our son and daughter sleep in it, but unfortunately there is a rule which says that if we accept your money, the Government will take away some of the supplementary benefit." That is the absolutely silly position. One cannot accept back the help that one originally gave.

6.45 pm

We want the Government to clarify the position once and for all. If they mean anything that they say about urban regeneration, improving training and alleviating unemployment, they must accept the amendment. Unemployment is not taken into account in standard spending assessments, so it cannot be taken into account when resources are allocated to combat unemployment and provide more training programmes.

The silly attack made on Derwentside council on 3 June during the Second Reading debate was referred to again today. Derwentside took action to combat the results of the closure of the Consett steelworks. It took sensible, entrepreneurial and enterprising action. It got off its backside and took action. It did exactly what the Secretary of State asks authorities to do in his city challenge scheme. He encourages local authorities to come up with a comprehensive scheme to tackle the unemployment, economic decline, degeneration and environmental despoliation which has taken place as a result of economic collapse. He encourages them to show initiative and come up with something that competes with any decent scheme anywhere else in Europe. He asks them to provide the wherewithal to make the scheme work and give people the backing that they need to show their own enterprise in creating jobs. Derwentside did it.

Now what do the Government say? They say, "You can have economic regeneration, you can have leisure facilities or you can have a decent environment, but you cannot have all three. You have to choose between investment in training and enterprise, such as programmes to set up workshops and technology parks,"—those schemes did everything that all hon. Members would want to do for their area—"associated leisure provision and economic regeneration." It is too daft for words.

The £6 million spent in Derwentside—according to the Government it is such an evil amount of money to spend —has ensured that many people in the area have jobs who would not have had them otherwise. It has reduced the call on supplementary benefit. It has reduced the amount that has had to be drawn in redundancy pay. It has reduced the demand on the family credit budget and the amount that would otherwise have to be paid out in housing benefit and free school meals. However, instead of applauding the authority for saving the Government probably substantially more than £6 million in benefit payments, the Government ridicule Derwentside local authority.

Derwentside is one of the authorities that benefit and should benefit from European Community aid. It is one authority, like many others in former steel and coal-mining areas, which the EC funds are intended to assist. The Government should help such authorities by lifting the ridiculous rules on additionality and capital. For goodness sake, they should accept the amendment and help local authorities to do a job of work in preventing unemployment, restoring jobs, providing training schemes, working in partnership with the private sector and making the money work. The Government should stop capping authorities and disregard the revenue consequence of capital expenditure.

In simple terms, the Government should allow local authorities to spend European Community money which does not damage our economy but helps it and which is not a drain on the local taxpayers but assist them. They should not penalise local authorities for spending that money. It is simple. There cannot be a more straightforward case and I shall be fascinated to hear the Government wriggle about why they are not willing to accept the amendment.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) asks for clarification. I am happy to supply it because, unusually for him, parts of his speech betrayed a misunderstanding. I shall cover matters that are familiar to him and which he understands perfectly well, before dealing with the issues on which the misunderstanding arises.

Our view of money from the European funds is that they should not merely fund domestic expenditure but should be additional to the amount that the Government would otherwise have to spend. That is the concept of additionality, and it means that our global total for public expenditure is increased by the amount that we expect to receive from European funds. In that way we ensure true national additionality.

We make capital allocations to local authorities, and they may spend money that they hold or credit approvals or supplementary credit approvals. The Government's aim is to control total public expenditure. The amount spent by local authorities is an important part of that, and allocations to local authorities are made in the light of totals set at national level that take account of European funds.

Whether the amount that a local authority spends is financed by receipts or money provided by the Government in credit approval, supplementary credit approval, or by grants received from Community funds makes no difference. It all comes within the capital allocation, which is not necessarily increased because part of it is financed by a Community grant.

A local authority in receipt of a European fund grant has an important advantage in that it no longer has to seek credit approval for that part of the money, and it does not have to draw on its receipts or borrow. Obviously, it is the cheapest possible way in which a portion of an authority's capital spending can be funded.

I think that the hon. Gentleman understands those concepts. Of course I am concerned that some local authorities have found it difficult to spend enough within their capital allocations in respect of money made available from European funds. That is why, last year, we top-sliced £25 million from credit approvals and why this year we shall top-slice £45 million. I have tried to ensure that part of that top slicing is made available to cover the gap for local authorities that receive money from European funds but which lack the capital cover to spend in line with what they will receive.

That deals with capital allocations and the way in which we are trying to address the matter through flexibility on credit approvals to help some local authorities to spend money that has been allocated to them by the Community.

I was asked how European fund grants are treated in the context of capping. It must be left to local authorities to decide which projects are worth pursuing and which should be included in their budgets. That applies whether or not they have assistance from the Community. Leaving local authorities to decide on their priorities fits in well with the city challenge initiative of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That challenge is largely about asking local authorities to organise their priorities and to put together packages of money for them.

Projects that receive a grant from the Community funds but which require the local authority to make some contribution so that the Community grant is not 100 per cent. of expenditure are no exception to this general rule. If the matter is important enough for the local authority to include in its budget, it will do so irrespective of whether that part of it is financed by the Community. The project should stand on all fours with others.

If the local authority receives money from the Community fund grant, it will need to raise that much less itself. The budget on which capping bites is that which the local authority funds from the community charge, the uniform business rate, the rate support grant and other specific grants. It does not include Community grant, because that is not part of the authority's budget. That money is outside the demand that the local authority makes on the collection fund. Therefore, it is outside our consideration for capping. I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands that point. We would not cap a local authority in respect of Community grant on part of a project.

Mr. Blunkett: The Minister's answer sounds extremely plausible until we think about what happens to European social fund allocations for, for example, training schemes. In such cases the local authority spends the money and a claim on EC resources is submitted afterwards. EC money is retrospective and the local authority draws on the collection fund to pay, for example, the wages of staff working in a training workshop which is 50 per cent. funded from the social fund. Would the authority be affected in the year in which it draws on the collection fund by capping for that expenditure, even though in future the authority would be reimbursed? If the Minister can answer that question, I shall be happy to concede that he has scored a goal against me.

Mr. Portillo: Before I answer that question, I should say that I got carried away in thinking that specific grants were within the budget of a local authority. I should have said that they are not, which means that the budget is even more restricted than I suggested.

The demand made by a local authority upon the collection fund will potentially be within the criteria for capping. I was not trying to score a goal against the hon. Gentleman but to offer clarification. If, in a subsequent year, a local authority is reimbursed by the European Community, the amount is not within the budget. Presumably that means that, in the subsequent year, the local authority has some other amount freed up, so that, taking money one year with another, the amount that it has had to spend has not brought it within the criteria for capping.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did not intend this, but the amendment literally means that, if any part of an item of local authority expenditure is funded by the European Community, all the expenditure, not just that part of it, should be exempt from capping. That would not be appropriate, as even the hon. Gentleman may think. Perhaps he will not think that way because he is against capping altogether, so I shall not try to pin that one on him. I think that he was intending to exempt that part of expenditure which comes in grant from European Community funds.

I hope that I can reassure the hon. Gentleman by saying that that is outside the budget and therefore not susceptible to capping. I have to recognise that, if the local authority spends the money in advance, then in the year in which it makes the demand on the collection fund, that demand, for whatever purpose, can bring it closer to the criteria for capping, but it will reap the advantage in the following year, when the grant is received and the grant will not bring it any nearer to the criteria for capping.

7 pm

Mr. Blunkett: I am grateful for the Minister's explanation. He will realise that my hon. Friends and I are in favour of not counting expenditure, whether from the EC or the local taxpayer, on projects that had been agreed as part of an EC programme, whether under the regional or social funds or under RECHAR. RECHAR is additional to the amount that the Government have already taken into account in terms of top slicing. It has to be like that, because RECHAR allocations are made after predicted capital allocations are announced by the Government.

However, we have had a prolonged and difficult debate about whether RECHAR will be accepted and whether authorities will have the necessary specific supplementary credit approvals. It is not a national issue. The debate is about the local authorities taking up schemes that they have drawn up and then had approved through RECHAR, and whether they will be able to go ahead with those projects when they receive the allocation.

It is fine if the authority gets a boost the year after, when the grant comes in, but in the year in which it spends the money, if it has to draw down on the collection fund, that authority can be pushed into fulfilling the criteria for capping, particularly that on year-on-year expenditure increases. That is important for authorities that may be capped in one year even though they will be helped the year after, and so have to make cuts in services that were supposed to be enhanced by the allocation of European moneys, rather than cancelled out.

The crucial point is that, the more complicated and centralised are the regulations that restrict the freedom of local authorities to act, the more that, in applying general rules, local authorities are restricted so that they cannot do their jobs properly. An authority may be capped one year simply because it has drawn down on the collection fund, but it will not be capped the next year because it has received resources that have lessened the demand on the collection fund. That makes no sense to us and no sense to those outside.

Furthermore, it makes no sense to count for capping purposes the money for a project that is supposed to be an additional benefit to the mainstream programmes of a local authority—that applies to inner-cities activities as well—rather than a substitute for what is already going on. The 50 per cent., or whatever the sum might be, that the authority has to find should not be included in the capping criteria—just as, retrospectively, the EC contribution is not.

The Minister's explanation has been helpful. I used the "goal against me" example with a smile, because I sometimes do not mind having a goal scored against me. It is winning the game that counts. It is important that we all have the same understanding when it comes to sorting out the Yorkshire rapid transport system, because otherwise education and home help services will be cut to pay for a project that does not involve additional local fund raising or poll tax increases, and has been agreed by local and central Government to make sense. On that basis, I am happy to beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Before I call the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) to open the debate, I remind him and the Committee that we have had a fairly good run on amendments to clause 1, so it would not be appropriate to go over the ground that we covered in those debates.

Mr. O'Brien: I appreciate that, Sir Paul, and I shall not go over the debates on the amendments. According to the explanatory memorandum:

"*Clause 1* provides that section 101 of the 1988 Act, which exempts from charge capping English and Welsh authorities whose budgets are less than £15 million, is to cease to have effect."

Therefore, the clause is important and significant.

It is sad to realise that the Government intend to press the capping of these authorities whose budgets are influenced by small amounts of expenditure. Examples have been given of how district authorities with budgets of £5 million, £6 million or £9 million can easily come into the capping range as a result of small increases in expenditure. As I said in a previous debate, this could represent as little as 20p or 30p per poll tax payer. Through our amendments to the clause, we tried to protect those local authorities that will be brought into the capping range, as that can only have a severe effect on their services.

Another disappointment is that, where local authorities, through their own efforts, have acquired additional financial support from either the EC or some other source, the Government have decided that that will be included in the limits set by the clause.

We also debated the precepting of parish, town and county councils in Wales on the collection fund. This is an important matter and we shall read carefully in *Hansard* tomorrow the answers to the questions on it. I hope that what the Minister said is correct, and it will not be part of the overall expenditure for district councils.

There is a gleam of hope for local authorities, because the clause will not apply before 1 April 1992, and we all hope that before then there will be a general election. I am sure that those serving in local government will welcome a general election because the Labour party has said that capping, as applied by the Government in the past two or three years, will be abolished, as will the poll tax system. People are hoping for an early general election, so that a Labour Government, who believe in and support local government, can introduce the policies that are needed to help local authorities to meet their responsibilities.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The clause is incredible, considering that the Government are supposed to be following a new policy and replacing the poll tax. It is especially incredible when later clauses are supposed to pave the way for the introduction of the new so-called council tax.

While all that is going on, we are back with the old form of poll tax legislation. The flavour of the debate smacks of what has been going on for a long time on the poll tax scene. All this is happening following the district council elections in which the Conservatives were devastated. Despite those results, and despite the verdict of the electorate—the people were obviously opposed to Conservative policies and especially the poll tax—at the first opportunity, the Government are back down the old poll tax route. Indeed, they are acting contrary to everything contained in their election manifesto, in which they were committed to the principle of accountability, with the link between local electorates and their councillors being of supreme importance.

All the injustices of the standard spending assessment, linked to the Government support grant, are bad enough in that many district councils have been forced to charge higher amounts than they would have charged had there been a fair system of grant in operation. Now, such charges must stop and services will be destroyed. Apart from services that must be provided in accordance with statutory duties, important local authority ancillary services will come to an end.

The area of Derwentside has come in for strong criticism from the Government. Not only did it have special needs because of the high rate of unemployment there, but the Government's funding arrangements for the area meant that Derwentside had to find ever more funds from its own resources. I referred earlier to a written answer that I received on 5 December. That was accompanied by information that was placed in the Library showing money coming from revenue support grant, from the business rate and from the poll tax.

7.15 pm

In the Committee debates on the introduction of the poll tax for England and Wales, we were told that, in rough and ready terms, 50 per cent. of the total would come from central Government funding, 25 per cent. from poll tax monies and 25 per cent. from the national business rate.

By 5 December last, of Derwentside's total standard spending assessment—which it obviously had to go beyond—only 18·3 per cent. came from revenue support grant. That contrasted with authorities better able to handle financial matters, such as Westminster, which got 57·8 per cent., and Wandsworth, with 49·6 per cent. Other authorities appeared at the high end of the figures, but many were at the low end, and Derwentside, on 18·3 per cent., was only 162 from the bottom of a list of 336. My area of North-East Derbyshire received 11·3 per cent. in revenue support grant.

How could such figures be called reasonable and just in view of the great disparities between areas? Reference has been made to Audit Commission reports giving figures of comparable areas. They show wide deviations between SSAs per charge payer. Are the Government's SSAs and calculations wrong, or is it suggested that the Audit Commission's judgment about authorities being comparable is wrong? I have shown how the figures deviate widely —by as much as 100 per cent. in some cases—and I am sure that other Audit Commission reports reveal additional fantastic disparities.

Nothing in the Bill begins to eliminate the injustices of the poll tax legislation. Those injustices must be corrected if the Government are to be seen to be introducing a paving measure for a new policy. Later we shall discuss the problems of valuation. The Government's so-called new schemes are full of nonsenses and our fear is that although we may do away with the most unjust form of taxation ever invented in any western democratic system and we shall put in its place the second most unjust system.

We should be doing something to help local authorities get by until fresh legislation is introduced. Instead of provisions designed to cap authorities, we should have provisions remedying the problems that have been created by the Government's poll tax legislation. In the past, I

have spoken at length about the massive attack involved in electoral legislation caused by the poll tax. While this is not the time to develop that point, sooner or later we shall need a full debate on that and similar issues.

In the meantime, there is no justification for the Bill. The Government are trying to gallop it through so that legislation of a sort is enacted before the next parliamentary recess.

Many authorities will be hit by the Government's criteria. An article in the *Municipal Journal* of 31 May entitled "Beyond Belief" lists the authorities that are likely to be included in the Government's criteria. The authorities mentioned are not only Labour-controlled but include authorities controlled by the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative party. As the majority are Labour-controlled, the Government claim that the measure is essential and necessary because they are dealing with profligate bodies. They are not.

Some of those authorities may have policies that could be considered problematic, but that is a matter between them and their electorate and not a matter for the House. Many are simply engaged in ordinary local government activities with the support of, and a stream of recommendations from, the Audit Commission and others to show that their activities are perfectly reasonable. I described the case of North-East Derbyshire, but many other authorities, such as Hartlepool and Easington in the north-east, are in a similar position. Those fall into the category of authorities that are likely to be capped or be threatened with capping, and will therefore have to cut their own throats in terms of expenditure. We must stop further development in that direction.

The districts of Conservative Members such as the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) will be hit by those measures. The hon. Gentleman should understand what is happening, as he served on the Committee that introduced the iniquitious poll tax legislation. I hope that he will not support the measure in the Lobby tonight, because this is an opportunity for Conservative Members to decide whether they have finally jettisoned the poll tax and are looking for an alternative, however inadequate, or whether they should go down the same road and vote at the Whips' behest. We must ensure that we inform their constituents that they have not departed from the principles upon which they initially built their case.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): The hon. Gentleman might like to know that Welwyn Hatfield is a Labour-controlled authority. It has the 18th highest community charge simply because the Labour authority has overspent, year in, year out, on services that its neighbours have provided at a much lower cost.

Mr. Barnes: If time allowed me to go through the 366 authorities, I would give the details of the amount of grant that Welwyn council receives from the Government. They are available in the Library and need to be carefully examined to see whether there is any credence in the hon. Gentleman's argument. Welwyn Hatfield probably operates exactly according to the general principles. A set of criteria has been devised which hits at certain authorities and not others.

Despite considerable efforts by Opposition Members, we never discuss the make-up and structure of the standard spending assessment and the grants that are linked to it. We have simply been told that there is a magical formula that allows the system to function fully and well, but that is not the case. The Government have deliberately manipulated and fiddled the arrangements. If a genuine principle is involved, they should be willing to talk to those authorities that feel that they are being badly treated because they fall foul of many of the conditions that have been laid down. North-East Derbyshire is one such authority. We are not allowed to meet the Minister to discuss those matters so we cannot have an impact on changing the way in which the formula will operate under the clause.

Mr. Bellotti: I begin by referring to the standard spending assessments and drawing attention to the serious problems in different parts of the country, especially Sussex. If all the Minister's faith will be put on SSAs and subsequent figures will be based on them, how can he justify the fact that the SSA for Wealden is £100 of relevant population in 1991-92; for nearby Lewes it is £94; for Adur it is £88, but for Hove it is £173? That is why, some two years ago, the Hove borough council did not need to levy a rate for its then ratepayers. There can be no justification for those disparities of SSAs in the same area. It is not surprising that some district councils in Sussex look to Hove and ask, "Why?" If the Government are to base their future spending plans on SSAs they must deal with that issue in East Sussex and say why Hove has double the SSA of authorities in the same area.

The same problem applies in other parts of the country, and hon. Members have referred to that matter throughout the debate. If the clause is to be approved, neighbouring authorities will suffer when they try to deliver a level service.

Some local authorities have special conditions in their make-up. It is essential for the local economy of Eastbourne that tourism, in all its manifestations, is backed. If the clause goes through, Eastbourne will have to make almost £1 million worth of cuts next year. Like most tourist resorts in this country, it will have to cut its tourism budget. As 9 per cent. of Eastbourne's population is employed in tourism, unemployment will increase if we withdraw the ability of the local authority to encourage economic generation. There will be more empty hotels and less money coming into the country from abroad.

Is the Minister saying that local authorities that depend on tourism should not spend money on, for example, cleaner beaches which is a Government policy? Eastbourne and 34 other resorts have just been awarded blue flags for the state of their beaches. Is the Minister saying that those local authorities should not spend money on encouraging people to spend time and money in their areas? Like other resorts, Eastbourne also spends money on providing plants and flowers. The Carpet gardens in Eastbourne are known internationally. Will budgetary cuts mean that those local authorities can no longer spend money on such things? It could be argued that they are luxuries beyond what local authorities must provide for people's needs. However, they provide economic generation and growth.

The Minister has not dealt with any of those issues tonight. His arguments have all been based on finance. Indeed, every decision that the Government make with regard to local authorities is finance-led.

We were given to understand that the clause would provide the assurances that we sought about the position of parish and town councils at the lower tier of principal

[Mr. Bellotti]

authorities. On examination, however, those assurances prove nothing of the sort. It is not true that the Government do not take into account the expenditure of those parish and town councils in reaching their decision to cap. I should be interested to receive a further response from the Minister about the position of parish councils. Is it true that the Government will not take account of any level of spending by parish councils so that whatever the level of that spending, it will not count in any way towards a decision to cap? If the Minister can confirm that he will not take that spending into account we shall be rather more assured. We have listened carefully to the Minister, however, and we are not convinced.

7.30 pm

Mr. O'Brien: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Minister has not properly clarified the influence that parish and town council precepts will have on the SSAs of district councils? The problem applies not to the non-metropolitan districts alone, but to the metropolitan ones. The hon. Gentleman has raised a pertinent point, as it appears that there is no cut-off point at which capping will apply to authorities lower down the scale.

Mr. Bellotti: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because we both failed to understand fully the Minister's response. I hope that we shall receive further clarification from the Minister so that we are clear as to the exact state of affairs before we vote.

During the speech of the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) there was an interchange that might have led hon. Members to believe that Pendle will not be affected by the proposals. That is not so. Pendle local authority will need to consider cutting its services by more than £500,000. It is not alone in that because another 88 local authorities will have to consider what cuts to introduce next year.

Should the clause be accepted the Minister must spell out the effect of those cuts on local services. The clause does nothing to meet the needs of local communities. It attacks local democracy and it will not lead to accountability. It is not worth supporting.

Mr. Portillo: I believe that we have made some progress in clarifying some of the issues, sometimes to the surprise of the Opposition.

I shall repeat what I said about parish councils. Parishes do not precept on districts, they precept on the collection fund. Potentially we may cap what a district demands from the collection fund. What the parish demands from the collection fund—what it precepts on the collection fund—is an entirely separate matter. When we draw up an SSA—a level of spending that is appropriate—we lump the district and the parish together on the ground that what parishes do is in substitution of what districts might otherwise do. The SSA takes account of district and parish spending together. When it comes to capping, however, what the parish precepts is outside the conditions for the capping of the district because the parish precepts on the collection fund, not the district.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister has now introduced a different dimension. He is now referring to the concurrent functions of parish and district councils. Is he saying that there must be clear demarcations between the functions of the district and parish councils? If one particular function is the responsibility of the district council, does that mean that the parish council should not precept for that particular service?

Mr. Portillo: No. The hon. Gentleman seems intent on trying to smell a rat that is not there. The justification for setting the SSA for a district and parish together is that parishes do in certain places what districts do in other places. Therefore, the only fair way in which to set the SSA is to set it according to what the parish and district spend together. Since the parish precepts on the collection fund directly, not on the district, and since we are concerned only with capping what a district demands on the collection fund, what the parish precepts has nothing to do with drawing the district nearer to being capped.

Mr. Gould: The capping criteria are defined in terms of the SSA. Does that mean that it is possible that a district could find itself exceeding its SSA because of a precept made by the parish which, as the Minister said, would be included in the district's SSA?

Mr. Portillo: No, that is not possible. The SSA for a district is set without reference to whether parishes exist. Where parishes exist we assume that they are simply doing things that districts would otherwise do. In those circumstances the parish precepts on the collection fund, not the district. We are concerned only with what the district precepts on the collection fund. That is the only thing that we are seeking to cap. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has identified that there is asymmetry between the way in which the SSA is determined and the way in which the capping operates—that I do not deny.

Mr. Gould: I am sure that we are both aiming to clarify this rather tricky matter, but surely the asymmetry is the important point. That may lead to a situation in which the district is capped independently, but it may be capped on the basis of a criterion—the SSA—that depends to some degree on the expenditure by the parish council. That is what I understood the Minister to say when he said that the parish's expenditure counts towards the district's SSA, but, because it precepts separately, does not impinge upon the cap, at least not directly. I suggest that it may impinge indirectly because of its influence on the SSA.

Mr. Portillo: If the hon. Gentleman is looking for a problem, I accept that there is one, but he has got the wrong one. The problem is the opposite. Where a parish exists the district may be unfairly advantaged, not disadvantaged, because what the parish is spending is precepted directly on the collection fund and does not figure as part of district spending. I have given the game away. There is a slight problem, but it is precisely the opposite of that suggested by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). In view of that I had better move on to other matters raised in the debate.

I wish to be a little more helpful to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) about the European Community. Where a local authority spends some money and subsequently gets a grant from the EC, in the year that it spends the money it must find it from the collection fund. In the year after, it will get the money from the EC. However, if, in year one, when the local authority spends that money, it already knows that it is going to get a grant from the EC, it can take that into account in the year that it spends the money because the budget is assessed on an accrual basis. If an authority is already certain that it will

receive EC money, albeit that that money will not pitch up until year two, it may take it into account in year one. I believe that that is a more helpful answer to the hon. Member for Brightside.

I have not said that I will not meet the authority that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) represents. I have said that, at the moment, there is nothing new to hear from him and nothing new for me to say to him. However, when we propose SSAs, certain local authorities and certain hon. Members will want to have meetings and my hon. Friends and I shall be as open as we have always been to agree to such meetings.

I was amazed by the speech of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti). It is not for me to do his work for him and to tell him why the SSA is higher in Hove. However, it is higher because the social conditions are different and he should know that better than anyone else. The method by which the SSA is calculated is available for him in the numerous statistical reports which show how the SSA is calculated.

I was especially surprised that the hon. Member should talk about tourism. Last year I increased the weighting given for tourism from 25 per cent. of a resident night per tourist to 50 per cent. of a resident night per tourist. No local authority in the country benefited more from that change than did Eastbourne. So when the hon. Gentleman failed to mention that fact, it struck me to the core as an example of remarkable ingratitude and insensitivity.

I feel that the House wants to bring this matter to a resolution. I reiterate that the Government are determined to deliver the council tax at reasonable levels. We have set out figures for what the council tax would have been this year. We are determined that we shall not have a repetition of what happened with the community charge when local authorities allowed their spending to go through the roof and arrived at community charges well in excess of what the Government had estimated.

We have given our reasonable estimates for the council tax. We intend to deliver the council tax close to those figures, and the only way in which that can be achieved is by restraint on local authority spending. We are in favour of that: the Labour party is dead against it. That is why our figures for the council tax are credible and why the Labour party's figures for a return to the rates——

Mr. O'Brien *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: —are wholly incredible. That is why this clause should stand part of the Bill.

Mr. O'Brien: I tried to intervene on the Minister because he referred to the introduction of the council tax. Some of the problems alluded to in this debate have been caused because the Government want to ensure that the council tax is put in place without a great deal of upset and rancour on the part of local authorities.

The Minister omitted to mention one element about which I wished to ask him a question. If the Government want a smooth transition to a council tax, will they announce the provisional capping criteria before local authorities' budgets are set? That will include district councils. When we considered the budget proposals of local government for 1991-92 we referred only to the metropolitan districts, the London boroughs and the shires, but now 333 authorities are under the threat of capping. So do the Government intend to announce the capping criteria for all local authorities, including the districts, before the budget process commences? If so, when can we expect the announcement?

Mr. Portillo: I intend, as last year, to set out the provisional criteria for capping for all local authorities well in advance, but I cannot yet say on what date I shall do so.

7.45 pm

Mr. O'Brien: I am sorry to come back on this issue, but given that local authorities will have to work within the Government's guidelines on their expenditure it is disappointing that the Minister has no knowledge of when the statement on budget-capping criteria will be made. If the Minister cannot tell us that tonight, will he consult the Secretary of State and let us have the information tomorrow, when we continue this debate? It is important that local government be given the information as quickly as possible so that representations can be made. One problem this year was the shortage of time for representations to be made by local authorities that were to be capped.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 273, Noes 211.

Division No. 164] **[7.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

Amendment of grounds for charge capping in Scotland

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I beg to move amendment No. 41, in page 2, line 4, at end insert:

'The Secretary of State shall not treat the total estimated expenses of an authority as excessive when the budget set by the authority results in an increase in expenditure less than the rate of inflation prevailing at the time budget is set.'.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to take the following Amendments: No. 3, in page 2, leave out lines 7 to 26 and insert—for paragraph 1 of Schedule 3 to the 1987 Act there shall be substituted—

"(1) In determining whether an increase in expenses by a local authority is excessive, the Secretary of State shall have regard to:

(a) the level of unemployment in the area in the preceding three years;
(b) the age structure of the population and the reports on the general levels of health as measured by heart disease;
(c) the condition of the housing stock and the numbers on the housing waiting lists;
(d) the numbers in receipt of income support;
(e) the number of one-parent families; and
(f) the number of disabled.".'.

No. 42, in page 2, leave out lines 7 to 11.

No. 43, in page 2, leave out lines 12 to 19.

No. 44, in page 2, line 13, leave out 'the end' and insert "'enactment'".

No. 45, in page 2, line 18, leave out from 'to' to end of line 19 and insert

'new burdens placed on local authorities as a result of legislation from central government'.

No. 46, in page 2, line 19, at end insert 'and

(c) shall have regard for the impact on the services available to, and the welfare of, the relevant population resulting from any action under this Act.'.

No. 47, in page 2, line 19, at end insert—

'The Secretary of State shall not have regard to grant aided expenditure assessments when deciding if an authority's planned expenses are excessive as indicated in paragraph 4 of Finance Circular 16/1990 issued by the Scottish Office.'.

Mr. Maxton: Clause 2 has been designed to bring Scotland into line with England and Wales in terms of capping powers. It extends dramatically the powers that the Secretary of State for Scotland will have to decide levels of spending in local authorities.

Amendment No. 41 and those linked with it, including those tabled by the Scottish nationalists and the Liberal Democrats, are designed to limit that power, so that it will not be quite as sweeping as it otherwise would have been.

All of us on the Opposition Benches—there are not many on the Conservative Benches—would have wished to see clause 2 deleted completely, but as the clause was passed on Second Reading, we have no option but to keep it as it is.

However, the powers that the Secretary of State is taking under the clause will, if enacted and used, so limit local democracy in Scotland that it will become almost meaningless. Under the clause, he will have almost complete power to decide what he believes is an excessive increase in expenses of a local authority.

When the Secretary of State looks at the planned expenditure of any local authority, he will be able to say that the increase that it is proposing is excessive, even though it may be below the rate of inflation. It may be, as has often been the case in the past few years, that the increase in local government costs is higher than the increase in the retail prices index.

The Secretary of State may still deem that the increase —which may be designed to do no more than to maintain services at existing levels—is excessive, and force the authority to reduce its poll tax—or, if by some freak, the Government win the next general election, its council tax —and bring cuts in its services.

The people whose services are cut at the whim of the Secretary of State are the same people who elected the local authority on the basis that it would provide certain services—[Hon. Members: "Where is the quorum?"] My hon. Friends rightly ask about a quorum. If this were a Standing Committee, the Government would not have a quorum and would be unable to continue with their business. Perhaps the rules of this Chamber should be brought into line with those that apply upstairs.

8 pm

The Government may, in certain circumstances, impose new duties on local authorities that lead to increased expenditure. Even then, the Secretary of State may decide that such expenditure is excessive. For example, in the past few years, school boards, primary school tests, and community care have meant increased expenditure for

local authorities on behalf of central Government, often against their better judgment—but they have not necessarily been exempted by the Secretary of State's capping powers.

The Secretary of State already controls the level of central Government grant to each local authority, and the level of non-domestic rates. Under the new powers in clause 2, he will have almost complete control over local authority expenditure and income.

The likely future for local authorities has been clearly illustrated by the Government's treatment of Lothian region this financial year. I am sure that some of my hon. Friends from Lothian will want to add to my comments. Under the threat of capping, Lothian regional authority reluctantly agreed to reduce its poll tax rather than be subjected to capping. The Secretary of State deemed that Lothian's increased expenditure was excessive and unreasonable. I emphasise the word "unreasonable" because, under the proposed new clause, that criterion will disappear.

Lothian's increase was 11·2 per cent.—a higher percentage increase than Strathclyde, Grampian or Highland. However, it was the same percentage increase as Tayside, and lower than that of the Borders, Central, Dumfries, Galloway and Fife.

Lothian's revenue support grant per poll tax payer is the lowest in Scotland. At £453 per head, it is well below that for the Borders, at £798, and for Dumfries and Galloway, at £781. Lothian's expenditure per poll tax payer is, at £1,222, well below the Scottish average, and the third lowest in Scotland.

If Lothian had received the average Scottish revenue support grant, its poll tax would have been only £133 per person after the Government's £144 reduction. Why did the Secretary of State decide that Lothian's expenditure increase was excessive and unreasonable? I will be happy to give way to the Minister if he will tell the House why Lothian's figures warranted the description of an excessive and unreasonable increase. As the Minister is nodding, I can only assume that it was because Lothian's expenditure was set to increase grant-aided expenditure by 12·18 per cent.

Last October, the Scottish Office issued finance circular 16/1990, which stated, in paragraph 4:

"It is important to emphasise that the authorities grant-aided expenditure has been arrived at principally for the purpose of determining and distributing grant. It is for each local authority to decide the level of services reasonably required in its area, having regard to the interests of the local community both as users of those services and as poll tax payers. The grant-aided expenditure is not an expenditure guideline and should not be regarded as such."

Why is it right for the Government to decide that grant-aided expenditure shall not be an expenditure guideline, but then to use it in deciding that a local authority's expenditure is excessive?

Under the present regulations and law, the Secretary of State's only threat has nothing to do with fact or logic, or with levels of expenditure, and everything to do with levels of poll tax and political prejudice. There was a blatant attempt to discredit the Lothian region Labour administration for political ends, in the slim hope that Labour in both Lothian and Scotland would suffer and that the Tories might win back some of the seats that they lost in 1987—or, more likely, might manage to hang on to some of the seats that they still hold in Scotland. That is very unlikely, but that is why the Secretary of State used the powers that he did. His use of them had nothing to do with local government expenditure or protecting poll tax levels. It had to do with trying to protect the Tory party's last slender hopes of keeping any seats in Scotland.

If, under the existing law, the Secretary of State can use his powers in such an arbitrary and biased manner, how much more frightening are the powers that he is now attempting to take? The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities estimates that, if one applied the same accounting criteria in England and Wales, 31 district councils and five regional councils would have faced capping this year. The Minister may disagree, but that is a good, sound estimate, made by people who are very experienced in local government finance.

We have tabled the amendments to put some blocks on the Secretary of State's excessive powers. It will be for the other parties to explain their amendments, but ours are designed to restore the status quo and to retain the criterion of unreasonableness. That is a weak criterion—as the Secretary of State proved this year, it does not stand up—but at least he is obliged to make some effort to explain his actions, whereas under the new powers he seeks, he would not have to do so.

Our amendments also try to ensure that, if a local authority keeps its expenditure below the rate of inflation, it will not be capped. At present, there is no guarantee of that. An authority could increase its expenditure by less than the rate of inflation and still be capped, because the Secretary of State deems its increased expenditure excessive.

Our amendments also require the Secretary of State to take account of new burdens placed on local authorities by central Government legislation. Finally, they say that the Secretary of State cannot use grant-aided expenditure as his guide.

The truth is that the Government dislike the very concept of local democracy. They have been in power for so long that they are now abusing power.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is corrupt.

Mr. Maxton: I would not necessarily have used that particular word, but I accept the implication. As Lord Acton says, power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Nowadays, if any authority wants to do things differently from the Government and has different ideas—even if it has been elected by the people—the Government wish to curtail its power, thus reducing its ability to perform its proper functions. The Government's arrogance is breathtaking: they believe that they are better able to decide what the people of Scotland want, although the people of Scotland have rejected them time and again. They cannot accept that local authorities elected by local people know what is best for those people, and should be free to make decisions without excessive interference on the part of central Government.

Neither clause 2—even if it is amended—nor the Bill in its entirety can end the desperate crisis that faces local government and many poll tax payers. The Government frantically abandoned the poll tax as they realised what a disaster it had become—a disaster which, incidentally, Opposition Members had predicted from the outset. Having abandoned it, however, they were not prepared to face the consequences of their own crass stupidity.

I now hear that the Secretary of State never supported the poll tax. I have heard through various grapevines that he does not believe in it. Perhaps, after the next general election, he will be free to write his memoirs and tell us whether that is true.

Instead of introducing clause 2 and the dictatorial powers contained in the Bill as a whole, the Government should have abolished the 20 per cent. minimum payment, backdated rebates for those who did not claim in time and restored local authorities' discretion to waive payment in cases where collection would cause hardship. If the 20 per cent. payment is wrong in 1993, it is wrong now, and should go now.

Above all, the Government should get rid of the poll tax as soon as possible. If they swallowed their pigheaded pride and recognised publicly that their so-called council tax was an inferior version of the old rating system, they could, even now, withdraw the Bill and present another to reintroduce the rating system on 1 April 1992.

We have said repeatedly that if the Government did that we would give their Bill every assistance. If they wanted to reform it later—as they suggest in the council tax legislation—there would be nothing to stop them doing so, in the unlikely event of their winning the next general election. Clause 2 of this Bill, however, does nothing to solve the problems that they have created for local authorities.

The amendment may improve the situation only partially, but any measure to reduce the extraordinary powers that the Secretary of State is trying to take must surely be tried. I ask my hon. Friends to support it in the Lobby.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) for his extensive references to Lothian region. I hope that people throughout Scotland will have the opportunity to see a still from a television shot of the Chamber, revealing that, during the first part of his speech, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), sat on the Front Bench in almost solitary splendour—accompanied by the Whip, his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). Leeds, North-East is, of course, a well-known Scottish constituency.

The Secretary of State for Scotland—the leader of the minority administration at the Scottish Office—has now arrived to double the Scottish Tory representation. Yet again, the Secretary of State—in this case, the right hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang)—has taken it on himself to set the budget for Lothian regional council.

I have probably been involved in setting local taxes in Scotland, nominally at least, more often as a Member of Parliament than as a Scottish district councillor, which I was for five years. That says a good deal about the march of centralisation under the present Government. Nowadays, instead of taxes and budgets being set by people who are accountable to the local electorate, they are set by people from Cornwall to Muckle Flugga—including people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are answerable not to the Scottish electorate but to the whim of Government Whips such as the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East. So much for local accountability and local democracy.

8.15 pm

This is not an obscure debate about local government finance; nor, indeed, is the Bill an honest measure to protect local taxpayers. That is the fig leaf behind which the Government try to hide in their attempt to justify poll tax capping—or rate capping, as it used to be called. We hear from Ministers, again and again, that the aim is to protect local taxpayers from profligate local authorities. The Bill, however, represents yet another part of the Government's discriminatory and vindictive campaign against local services in selected parts of Scotland.

My constituency suffered more than most from central interference in local affairs during the Thatcher years. Here we are again, under the new, supposedly squeaky clean Prime Minister, suffering exactly the same treatment. The image makers are working overtime nowadays. It seems to me that the only difference between this crocodile and the last is the fact that this one seems to smile a little more often.

Ministers have taken powers to intervene in local government budgeting where they see fit to judge, purely subjectively, that the plans of elected local representatives are excessive and unreasonable. It beats me how on earth the perpetrators of the poll tax can be deemed fit judges of what is excessive or unreasonable. My hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart said that the Secretary of State for Scotland had tried to distance himself from the poll tax; I find that amazing.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): No.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am glad to hear it, because I remember vividly—as will my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart—the long, weary hours in the Standing Committee on the so-called Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, when the right hon. Gentleman was one of the Members who supported the legislation through thick and thin. We tried to warn them then: we told them it would be a disaster, that it would be unfair and that it would lose the party elections. Virtually all the Tory Members on the Committee lost their seats, but still they would not learn. Now, finally, the penny seems to have dropped; but we cannot trust such people to be objective judges of what is unreasonable in local government budgeting.

The Secretary of State considers it excessive and unreasonable for pensioners in Lothian region—including the far-flung parts of my constituency—to have the free bus passes for which people in Lothian voted, as they have done repeatedly in local elections. He also thinks that a range of other local services are unreasonable and excessive—for instance, the Abbey residential home for old people in North Berwick, which is to be closed because of the package of cuts he has imposed on the region. The right hon. Gentleman wants to take credit for taking £18·5 million out of Lothian's budget and cutting the poll tax, but he must also face the consequences of the painful cuts that our constituents are having to suffer.

The services to which I refer are not luxuries; they are vital to the well being of the elderly, the disabled and others who rely on them. The minority regime at St. Andrew's house, however, considers them excessive and unreasonable.

The Secretary of State for Scotland has given himself the power—and now he seeks more power—to set the budgets of Scottish local authorities. But he has left the

[Mr. Home Robertson]

responsibility for providing local services and responsibility to the local electorate with local councillors. It was Rudyard Kipling, was it not, who referred to

"power without responsibility—the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages"?

Kipling knew a thing or two about the law of the jungle, and one wonders with what reptiles he would have compared Scottish Ministers, given their conduct over the years. Their judgment has been shown once again to be excessively and unreasonably harsh and arbitrary.

Let us look in detail at the situation in Lothian region, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart has already referred. Lothian has been capped again by the Government. As my hon. Friend said, for a start, Lothian regional council gets less Government subsidy per head than any other region in Scotland. It receives £88 per head less in subsidy than the Scottish average, and £117 a head less than the constituents of the Secretary of State, in Dumfries and Galloway region.

Grant discrimination makes it inevitable that Lothian has to set a higher local tax than anywhere else in Scotland. The inefficiency and cost of the poll tax system makes the position even worse. My hon. Friend said that the Government were abolishing the poll tax system. Would to God they were. If their plans are carried through, that system will last not only throughout the current year but for another two or three years, under the programme that they have in mind, complete with the surcharge which people on very low incomes still have to pay. The poll tax is still very much with the people of Scotland. The inefficient and costly system dreamed up by the Government is still hurting people in our country.

The Secretary of State has seen to it that Lothian starts with a built-in disadvantage because of the discriminatory distribution of central Government grant. Lothian regional council has tried to make the best of a difficult job by setting a modest budget—£10 per head lower than the average for Scottish regions, and £19 a head less than Dumfries and Galloway regional council, which covers the area represented by the Secretary of State for Scotland —*[Interruption.]* I do not know why the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is pulling such faces at me; I am only citing figures that were provided in reply to parliamentary questions. I can refer to them more closely if he likes.

Despite Lothian's prudent budgeting, Government manipulation has left us with the highest poll tax in Britain outside Lambeth. That would be bad enough, but to add insult to injury, the Secretary of State now seeks to cut £18·5 million out of the Budget. He tries to take the credit for cutting the poll tax, while leaving councillors to face the music for the loss of pensioners' bus passes, and the other cuts for which the Secretary of State is personally responsible. He will not get away with it—at least, the Secretary of State himself may survive because he has given an extra subsidy to people in his part of the world, but the previous Secretary of State, now Secretary of State for Transport, and the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) will have a job explaining to their constituents why they have to put up with worse services and such a high poll tax because of the financial gerrymandering of the Scottish Office. They cannot be allowed to get away with it, and they will not.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): After a fairly long Committee sitting we have come to the clause which applies to Scotland. Although we are discussing amendment No. 41, moved by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) I should like to allude to amendment No. 3, tabled by my hon. Friends and myself, which has not been given pride of place. It has the same thrust as the other amendments in the group, and would have the same impact on a situation that causes great concern.

With great respect, I have to say that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has been looking backwards and considering the Secretary of State's current powers, but we are concerned about the powers that the right hon. Gentleman intends to take, the thrust of which would be to relate the Scottish position to that in England and Wales. That should cause us all great concern, because the basis of local authority finance in Scotland, as we all know, is significantly different.

The main burden of my remarks may not seem to relate strictly to our amendment, because that would affect schedule 3 to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, but I want to relate it to the Scottish experience. I want to ask the Secretary of State about grant-aided expenditure, to which the hon. Member for Cathcart alluded. Will the Minister tell me whether we are to move away from the criteria in the substantial document, "Grant-Aided Expenditure"? That document bears some examination, because its case rests not on prejudice but on some degree of objectivity—although not perfect objectivity, of course.

If the Committee will forgive me, I shall quote the introductory paragraph of that document for 1991-92:

"The tables presented in the main part of this report show the calculation of Grant Aided Expenditure . . . for 1991-92 for regional, district and island authority services. These calculations are prepared using the client group approach which is a systematic means of allocating a predetermined level of expenditure equitably among local authorities. It should be noted that the client group approach does not determine the level of provision in absolute terms nor its distribution between services. The total relative GAE for a local authority is the sum of the separate assessments for individual services. The total estimates of GAE for each authority are used by the Scottish Office as the basis for the distribution of the Revenue Support Grant."

That is the basis for the distribution of a grant. It is not to be used to determine whether expenditure is excessive. I ask the Minister whether it will be used as such. I shall happily give way if I am wrong, and we can save a lot of time, but, if I am correct in my assumption, in order to allocate the distribution of the rate support grant we shall use a device which sub-groups of local authorities have worked out with the Scottish Office over a period of years. I do not say that it is perfect; we may have disagreements about it—I am sure that Lothian would, and other authorities might, disagree with it—but there is a certain sense in which it can be regarded as a touchstone. We are moving away from that.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has sent me an appendix which says:

"In England the capping criteria has been in place for some time and is normally centred around both the movement on a year to year basis in an authority's budget and what excess, if any, that budget generates in respect of that authority's standard spending assessment as set by the Government. The likelihood is that in Scotland instead of measuring excesses against SSA, the equivalent will be an authority's grant-aided expenditure assessment."

COSLA, the local authorities in Scotland and the Committee deserve an answer, not in the sweet by and by, but now. COSLA's appendix continues:

"This is a matter of particular concern as it has never been accepted either by the Convention or its member councils that GAE assessments are in any way a true and accurate assessment of what each authority should be spending."

That is the gravamen of my criticism of what the Government are trying to do. On later clauses we shall discuss the intentions on valuation.

The hon. Member for East Lothian spoke about the effect of previous legislation on Lothian and other regions. As the hon. Member for Cathcart said, by giving the Government the powers that they seek in the clause, we would bring many local authorities that are excluded from capping powers within the ambit of those powers. Restrictions imposed by the words "excessive" and "unreasonable" will be removed.

Those are enormous powers to give any Secretary of State, but they are enormous powers to give a Secretary of State in a Government who have rested their case for the reform of local authority finance on the basis of local autonomy and accountability.

8.30 pm

We are giving the Government enormous powers to interfere with local autonomy and accountability because they have moved into the local authority sphere. The Minister, no doubt, will tell us what percentage of local authority revenue will come from the so-called council tax, but it must be about £1 in £10. The Government say that Scottish local authorities will collect council tax revenue of about £800 million, but that if they try to raise extra revenue to meet need caused, for example, by higher unemployment, the United Kingdom's macro-economic structure will disintegrate. I do not believe that. It may happen if local authorities that are responsible for 50 million people decided to do it, but not when authorities are responsible for 5 million people.

The hon. Member for Cathcart rightly said that we are concerned about having the poll tax for longer than is desirable. Anyone who is aware of the exigencies of the poll tax would not want it to continue longer. The Scottish National party and the Liberal Democrats have devised systems of local income tax. I have alluded to that before, so will not go into it.

Mr. Maxton: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but at a conference that I attended recently, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) suggested the replacement of the poll tax not by a local income tax but by 100 per cent. Government grant to local government. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would clarify that.

Mr. Douglas: I am not avoiding the question, but things have moved on. The Government raised VAT to 17·5 per cent. and are now responsible for 90 per cent. of local authority revenue. But should they so desire, they could become responsible for 100 per cent. Collection of the poll tax is down to 50 per cent. As a short-term expedient to save local government the embarrassment of trying to collect an uncollectable tax, the Government should have offered 100 per cent. support and the poll tax would have been abolished at a stroke.

A Labour Government would have to consider that, because they would be unable expeditiously to introduce the so-called fair rates. Capital value assessments and valuations will not be introduced until 1993 at the earliest, and that will impose enormous burdens on Scottish local authorities. We agree with the hon. Member for Cathcart and were ahead of the Labour party in suggesting that the 20 per cent. rule should be abolished.

Mr. Maxton *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Douglas: We may cavil about that, so let me put it gently: there is no disagreement that the 20 per cent. rule should be abolished and that students and others should be exempt from the poll tax.

The Government have a responsibility to bridge the gap in revenue. Perhaps VAT should be increased further, but the most efficient measure is the standard rate of tax. In the long term, we propose a local income tax, which could be introduced by 1 April 1992 if we began now.

The powers that are being sought by the Government cannot be justified. They cannot speak of the autonomy or accountability of local authorities when they determine what an authority will do, when they are responsible for 90 per cent. of its revenue and when they are saying, "No matter what the electors of the area want, we will determine what is excessive."

Earlier, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said that he was horrified when he spoke to unelected people who said that they were speaking for areas. If we diminish the role of local authorities, non-elected people will speak for areas, because it will be difficult to attract councillors of a sufficient calibre and local authorities will not be accountable to their electorates.

The Government must make up their mind about whether they want to give local authorities real power, and that means accountability for revenue. They cannot drive a wedge between authorities' accountability for the services that they offer yet at the same time determine what revenue they can raise.

The Government are moving not only from the criteria that have been established to determine what is excessive but from grant-aided expenditure. They are trying to make Scotland follow the English model of the standard spending assessment by using a device that was not designed for that purpose. The tenuous trust that has been established between Scottish local authorities and the Scottish Office will be eroded and the Government will pay a heavy price.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Liberal Democrats' amendment No. 46 has the same general thrust as that moved by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). He sought to ensure that capping powers should not be imposed if local authority spending was contained within the rate of inflation. We seek to ensure that the Government would not impose capping without taking account of the impact on the local community and on the welfare provisions. In all honesty, the amendments are merely devices within the framework of the Bill to try to constrain the application of capping powers. As all the speeches have shown, it is the principle that we fundamentally oppose.

It will be interesting to hear the Minister defend and justify the Government's position, but no doubt he has a brief that will eat all the words ever delivered and spouted by his predecessors when they gave us what it would be fair to call lectures on the need to introduce a system of local financing which would ensure accountability to the

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

electorate. That is now a dead duck. Accountability to the local electorate is no longer one of the Government's objectives.

However, there is a more worrying issue. I am not sure whether it would be appropriate, so I shall not identify the person involved, but I spoke to a member of the Government when the Government announced the abolition of the poll tax. He passionately supported the poll tax, but said that, once people realised that the Government were setting up a separate system of tax collection to produce precisely 14 per cent. of local government expenditure, they would start to wonder, "What kind of crazy system is that?" The Government are trying to impose capping powers on local authorities which, in any case, will have the right to raise only about 14 per cent. of their total expenditure from that source. How can that be?

The argument that used to be deployed was the minginess of the Government's support grant. That was the weapon that the Government used before, and it was pretty effective. When local authority ability to raise revenue is squeezed to such an extent, it is extraordinary that the Government should now introduce comprehensive capping powers.

I remember the number of occasions when the Secretary of State for Scotland boasted to the House about how he was able to administer local government in Scotland without recourse to capping. Throughout the period of the crisis with the rates, throughout the revaluation, throughout the introduction of the poll tax and its entire administration, the Scottish Office stood alone, proud that it did not have to introduce capping. Now that the poll tax has been swept away, to the Government's eternal humiliation, capping is suddenly not only necessary, but necessary as a permanent and absolute power to be available for use against all authorities on every occasion. That seems an extraordinary development.

There are several questions that we must ask the Minister. How does he believe that it is appropriate to have a system of local government finance which requires a separate tax collection system that yields only 14 per cent. of local authority expenditure? How can we trust him and his colleagues in the Scottish Office to determine what is excessive and extravagant and to determine what criteria to use to judge authorities' performance?

I echo the words of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) about the breakdown of trust that will follow between the Scottish Office and local authorities. There has been a basic understanding that the Government have a certain degree of right, and that there was a client relationship. Reference has been made to the confusion about how the rate support grant was calculated. In spite of the client group approach, there was some mystery about how each local authority's revenue and support grant was determined. However, it was accepted that there was a rough and ready justice and that the approach was broadly fair.

However, when the only determinant is the arbitrary judgment of Ministers who are beleaguered, whose backs are against the wall and who are facing political annihilation, one cannot believe that there is an objective analysis. There will be a simple, blatant political fix designed to try to secure the preservation of the species. The record and the experience of the past few years should tell the Government that it will not work, but that does not stop them trying.

8.45 pm

The people of Scotland are pretty fed up with the Government and with the contempt with which local government has been treated. They are also pretty fed up with the way in which they are encouraged to vote for local councillors whom they duly elect, but are then treated with contempt on the ground that the councillors whom they have elected cannot be trusted to fulfil their obligations. The Government cannot say that not enough people vote. People have the right to vote; if they do not turn out to vote, it is not the Government's job to determine at what level to intervene and decide whether a vote is invalid. There are parliamentary constituencies in which the turnout to vote is not what it should be, but I accept that this is not the appropriate moment to discuss exactly how the House is elected and the relationship between the votes cast and the seats won.

I say merely that either elected democratic local government has a place in the future or it does not. The clause appears to mark the end of real democratic, accountable local government. The Minister and his party will be held accountable for that. He is making it extremely difficult to ensure that in future we have local authorities that can be trusted not only by the people but in their working relationship with central Government. If he destroys that trust and the working relationship between the Government and local authorities, which works pretty well in Scotland, despite the conflicts that have emerged, he will have destroyed a vital mechanism for delivering local services tailored to local needs and priorities. That is what the Government are abolishing and they will be held to account for it.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): So far, this has been a rather odd debate because it has taken place entirely between members of the Opposition. No Scottish Tory Back-Bencher is present to listen to this debate which affects Scotland and no Conservative Members are even rising to speak.

I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who earlier repeated the famous quotation about the prerogative of the harlot being power without responsibility. At least it can be said of the harlot that she is prepared to play an active role.

During last week's debate, I interrupted the Secretary of State to ask him to name the Scottish councils that he thought were extravagant and wasteful. He said that he could happily leave that to the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), and that he would do so eloquently. The hon. Member for Eastwood did not name one such council, because he could not. All he did was to reply in a nit-picking way to some points that had been made in the debate and merely mentioned various resources that had been allocated. Once again, he made a speech of the type that leads people to be deceived because they believe that the resources are hard cash instead of merely the ability to borrow money or to raise money through the sale of assets. Once again, an attempt was made to mislead.

Strathclyde especially is facing massive cuts on top of its previous round of cuts. That leaves it with extremely

serious decisions to make. The earlier round of cuts has caused the axing of many worth while voluntary bodies which were doing a great job in their communities but which have been forced to either give up their work entirely or to curtail it considerably.

I mention specifically one function of Strathclyde region, which is not a statutory duty but is nevertheless a welcome and respected function—the provision of nurseries for the under-fives. In my constituency, the local regional councillor, Neelam Bakshi, myself and local parents had to put up quite a struggle to preserve a nursery. The region accepted our views, but it has to be said that the need for a nursery in that one small part of one constituency in Glasgow is at least double the places provided in the area. Only yesterday, the Government said that they would provide 160 creche places for customers of Glasgow development agency, which would be funded partly by the private sector and partly by the public sector. They have at least recognised that the need is there. If they recognise that, why cannot they ensure that the resources are there when local authorities are providing that service instead of forcing the authority to consider cuts?

It is obvious that the Government are simply using their powers, which stem from their majority in the House, to force cuts that they cannot justify. It is interesting that they want to remove the word "unreasonable" from local government legislation, which says that if spending is "excessive and unreasonable", the Government will take powers to cut it. They have never been able to show that Scottish local authorities acted unreasonably. They simply change the goalposts and remove that word. If they were able to provide evidence, they would have done so and they have had ample opportunity to do so over the past 12 years. They have never been able to talk about any Scottish local authority in those terms.

We have made the point before and we will make it over and over again until this lot are shifted out of power. When the Division Bell rings tonight, the majority will come trooping through the Lobbies with no idea what they are voting on and what the effect will be on Scotland. They know nothing and they could not care less. They will then wonder why they are so unpopular in Scotland. I do not know what it takes to tell them—except the next general election.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I had not intended to make a contribution to the debate, but the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) has goaded me into making a contribution from the Conservative Benches. I promise that it will not be a lengthy contribution and I do not usually disappoint the Opposition when I make such a pledge.

In my early days in public life, I served as a member and chairman of a parish council, as a member, chairman and leader of a district council, as a member of a county council and as a committee chairman of a county council committee. In those days, as today, parish councils had to precept the big brother council—the district, city or borough council—for the money that they had to spend. They do not collect their own money; they precept the district councils for the money. However, parish councillors still work out their spending plans and their priorities. It does not make any difference who collects the tax.

What really matters to the councillors who are elected is to ensure that the money is spent wisely for the sake of the people who have elected them on to the parish council. The system works well and I do not see why the Opposition should make such a fuss about who collects the tax as long as the elected councillors have the opportunity to fix their own priorities and their own spending plans.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East) *rose*——

The Temporary Chairman: I call Mr. Thomas Graham.

Mr. McAllion: This must be the first occasion on which I have been mistaken for my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). I am sure that any comparison would withstand an objective analysis.

The group of amendments relates to the Government's attempts to strengthen the capping powers available to the Secretary of State for Scotland. To understand fully the significance of the amendments with which we are trying to change clause 2, it will be helpful to look back at some of the recent history of capping.

I remember well the 1986 Green Paper review of local government finance. At that time, we were assured that capping would be a transitional measure which would be phased out as the poll tax was phased in and that the poll tax would ultimately prove to be the system of accountability in local government which would render unnecessary capping powers for the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment. We were told that everyone would pay the poll tax, that everyone would have a stake and that everyone would therefore hold to account the local authorities whose spending was deemed to be excessive and unreasonable. We were told that with the advent of the poll tax, capping would be rendered completely redundant.

Looking back to 1986, I am struck by the fact that the review paper was quite touchingly innocent in its belief about what would come to pass. Things did not quite work out as the authors of the Green Paper intended. The poll tax ran into inevitable political trouble and as the poll tax receded, so did the early confidence that the Government had shown in it.

Capping began to make a comeback. We were first told that the poll tax would take a number of years to work and that we had to have capping powers as a weapon of last resort. We were then told that capping powers were not a weapon of last resort, but a reserve power that might have to be used from time to time. From a reserve power, capping became a selective action power. In clause 2, we are told that capping is a necessary power without which the Secretary of State cannot perform his function as the head of the Scottish arm of the Government.

Ministers will seek to assure us that clause 2 simply brings Scottish capping powers into line with those available to the Secretaries of State for Wales and for the Environment. They will also tell us that we need stronger capping powers in Scotland because the current powers available to the Secretary of State are limited and prevent him from fulfilling the role that the Government intend for him. However, that means that the Secretary of State for Scotland will now be able to determine not only the level of local tax in a local authority area, but the level of local services in the area.

I come from Dundee. The only time the citizens of Dundee see the Secretary of State for Scotland is when he sweeps into the city in a big car cavalcade and poses briefly in front of the television cameras for an opening or a

[Mr. McAllion]

launch. He then sweeps out of the city before most people in Dundee are aware that he has been there. Usually the first inkling that the people in Dundee have that he has been in the city is when they turn on their televisions at night and realise that he was there earlier in the day.

I understand why the Secretary of State may prefer that. He knows that he is neither popular nor charismatic, especially with Dundonians. It is always better to be safe than sorry, so why tell people in Dundee that he is coming to the city? It is best for him to get in and out of the city before people realise that he has been there. That is the safest way in which the Secretary of State can visit Dundee.

The man who is almost frightened to show his face in the city is the same person who will ultimately decide the level of local taxes in Dundee. He is the same person who will ultimately decide the level of local services in Dundee. He is the same person who has never stood for election at any level in Dundee and never will. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) stood for election in Dundee a long time ago. He registered a respectable 19,000 votes in the constituency of Dundee, East. May I remind him that the Tory candidate at the last election in Dundee registered an unhealthy 5,000 votes? That is not to say that the hon. Member for Eastwood was a much better candidate than those who have stood in the years since. It simply reflects the fact that the Tory party is that much more unpopular than in the 1970s when he stood in the city.

9 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): On my hon. Friend's point about the Secretary of State sweeping into Dundee and sweeping out, perhaps the Secretary of State can do that with such alacrity because there are roads in and out of Dundee. The Secretary of State never comes to Kilmarnock because if he ever gets there, he will not get back up the A77 safely.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I remind him that we have roads in and out of Dundee because we have a Labour administration in Tayside regional council which has made sure that we have roads.

We are expected to approve the powers given to the Secretary of State for Scotland in clause 2, knowing that that would give him the authority to cap local expenditure, not in accordance with criteria generally agreed in the House, agreed between the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Scottish Office Ministers or agreed in any other way, but in accordance with criteria on which the Secretary of State for Scotland alone decides and on the basis of judgments which he alone makes.

Whatever happened to democracy, accountability and direct elections in Scotland? In this alleged Mother of Parliaments we are expected to pass a clause which effectively will be a licence to the Secretary of State for Scotland to exercise what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) described on Second Reading as arbitrary authority. Unless we approve the limitations which the amendments propose on the powers available to the Secretary of State for Scotland, we shall give him unparalleled power at local government level and make a reality of what was once merely a political slogan —that the Secretary of State for Scotland was merely a colonial governor. If the Secretary of State is given the powers in the clause, he will be a colonial governor in Scotland.

The limitations in the amendments are moderate—perhaps in keeping with my party these days. The amendments deal with moderate issues such as expenditure. If local government expenditure rises at less than the rate of inflation there should be no capping. I cannot understand why the Secretary of State for Scotland assumes that he would need to cap local government expenditure if it was rising at less than the rate of inflation.

The amendments also say that capping should be applied only where it is reasonable to do so. If the Secretary of State cannot accept that, he is telling the Committee that capping should be applied where it is unreasonable to do so and that he wishes to retain the power for the Secretary of State for Scotland unreasonably to cap local authorities throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. If that is what he is saying, I am sure that he will not say it very loudly when the general election comes.

Our limitations would also require that decisions on capping should not be made solely on the basis of the Secretary of State's judgment but that others should be involved in deciding what criteria should be applied where capping is thought to be the obvious route to take. The amendments also suggest that account should be taken of the new burdens placed on local authorities by central Government legislation. Surely that is a reasonable thing to ask.

The demands in the amendments are not excessive. By any standard they are sweet reason itself. If the Minister and the Government find it impossible to accept them, we must conclude that they are the people who are excessive, extreme and not fit to be in government. In the Government's arguments about the clause, especially on Second Reading, we heard a strange and novel doctrine being spun. It is the idea that local voters cannot be trusted to think for themselves and that they are not fit to decide who should be elected to their councils and who should make decisions about raising local revenue to pay for local services. We have been told that the Secretary of State for Scotland must decide for them, although he would describe it otherwise.

The Secretary of State once said—I think that it was in a statement to the House—that we were dealing with greater accountability to the national taxpayer rather than to the local taxpayer. But the problem with that argument is that the national taxpayers did not vote for the Secretary for Scotland either. So he does not have that democratic figleaf. Ministers are exercising power and making decisions at national and local level without ever having been elected either at local or national level in Scotland. That is the system which was described by Tory Members as unacceptable when it operated in eastern Europe, but which they use to mask their electoral weakness in Scotland and excuse their right to run Scotland without any democratic mandate.

Some Conservative Members referred to what they described as a breakdown of trust. The way in which the Government have operated in the past 11 to 12 years in Scotland is leading to a breakdown in trust in not only this Government but the entire system of government in Scotland. That is why the Tories are the only party in Scotland opposed to constitutional change and reform. For many reasons there must be constitutional reform in Scotland and a Scottish Parliament. One of the main

reasons for the establishment of such a Scottish Parliament is the behaviour of the Government over the past 12 years and the way in which they have treated local government.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I support amendment No. 41. I spent a great deal of time in local government and I clearly remember meeting local people who put into the system their thoughts about the types of buildings and services that they wanted. We based our programmes and policies on such an input, and when we fought elections the people voted for us. Throughout Scotland, local people argued their case and supported the political party of their choice.

Since 1979, the Government have committed the serial murder of local government. They have undermined the role not just of local government but of councillors. In the eyes of the public, they have made "councillor" a dirty word. The Government have accused them of not trying to deliver services and have used Parliament to mount a constant political attack on democratically elected councillors. That has caused a great loss of confidence in local government. The Government are beginning to rue the day that they started such an attack; that is evident from the way in which they were decimated at the last local government elections in England.

I am extremely worried about the proposal to cap local government expenditure. In my constituency surgery at the weekend, I spoke to people from Houston who wish to see the construction of a local library. People in Kilbarchan would like to see the opening of a community centre, and people in Lochwinnoch would like a play area for their children. In almost every village in my constituency, people want amenities that will improve their quality of life. That is admirable. Hon. Members like to see local people taking an active interest in their surroundings and speaking to the appropriate people, such as local councillors and Members of Parliament.

The Minister knows that I am disturbed that services in my area are being hammered, not because of capping, but because of the Government's systematic underfunding of local government. That has meant that there are not enough places for the elderly in day care centres, and not enough home helps. The savage increase in concessionary fares is the result of the Government's deliberate underfunding of local government.

The Government have now produced a capping plan which, they say, will protect people and prevent them from paying too much. No one has ever come to my surgery complaining that he is paying too much for local services, but many people complain about the Government and about the savage attacks on local government funding. The Government seem to have a tremendous hatred for local government, which provides many essential services to our elderly, our disabled, our mentally handicapped and children living in bad conditions created by the Government's mad economic policies.

People face high interest charges, and mortgage rates are going through the roof; families are made homeless and have to go to local authorities begging them to provide homes; yet the Government are denuding local authorities of the finance to build houses for rent, and to provide the services that help children who come from families that are broken up because of high mortgage rates and unemployment. These factors put stresses and strains on family life as they do on local government. People want local government to act as Santa Claus, because the Government have failed them.

Capping is an import from the far east—as far east as Russia. The Russians have been asking the Government to help in their economic policies, but it looks as though, instead, the Government are importing a totalitarian system and imposing controls on local government. Local government has become as misnomer. The struggle to keep local government is nearly over. The central control that George Orwell portrayed in "Nineteen-Eighty Four" is here, and has been approaching for a long time. Capping is just another step along that line.

The day of reckoning is around the corner. People want decent local government, with involvement by the local people. In my constituency, people are crying out for services to be provided. That will come about only if central Government allocate more funds to local government and allow local government to get its act together and to have the power to borrow and to build. If local government cannot do that, how will we have local government services? Such services need money. Instead of capping, the Government should be supporting those services.

This week, I saw one of the most successful films ever made, "The Silence of the Lambs". It has some analogies with what is going on. We have a cannibal Government who want to gobble up more and more power for themselves. However, we know that power corrupts. The Government's attitude towards local government is corrupt. It threatens the democratic process because it permeates to those who vote for local government. The Government want to impose the totalitarian system that is so beloved by all of them.

I am disgusted that we are capping rather than increasing local government expenditure. Increases would ensure that the services for the elderly and handicapped that local government has provided for many years would continue. The Minister has an opportunity, by supporting the amendment, to support common sense and decency, and to ensure that local government continues in its rightful place.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Tonight, those who have spoken have thrown what, if we were not in Parliament, would be called abuse at the Minister. Instead, we should perhaps compliment him on his forbearance and fortitude. I have never before known a human being who has managed to go through such a difficult time over local government finance, with so many twists and turns and U-turns, and remain smiling. There have been no tears of regret, and the Minister is smiling again. He reminds me of the words of an old song made famous by a constituent of mine, Sydney Devine, from Cleland, just down the road from Mr. MacGregor of Shotts. The words could be applied to the Minister:

> "If they gave gold statuettes
> For smiles of regret
> He'd be a legend in his time."

The Minister has gone through the whole of this sorry story about local government finance smiling. The horror of the poll tax stands in contrast to that, and I need not enumerate it because all of us—presumably even the people of Eastwood—well know the problems caused by the poll tax. We meet those people in our surgeries. At times, we see grown men reduced to tears by frustration and despair.

9.15 pm

I will not go over those issues, because I wish to concentrate on one fundamental question as we consider the mechanics of poll tax capping. In the last year, we have seen not simply a change of tactics in capping, not an instrumental change in local government finance or even a change in the manner in which we deal with local government finance. The issue of capping gives rise to a fundamental change of principle by the Government.

A good start would be for the Minister to say whether he agrees with the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who said in recent days that she believed that the poll tax was correct in principle. If he agrees with that, we are in a peculiar position, for the fundamental principle of the poll tax was accountability. It was sold—or, rather, was not sold—by means of that propaganda or marketing too. All the suffering, impoverishment, indignity and frustration has been due to that one principle of accountability, to which, at least in her honesty, the right hon. Member for Finchley still sticks.

We were told that, for too long, local authorities had spent too much money, and that accountability was the only democratic way—through the ballot box—to stop it. For three years, the point was hammered home. A relationship was to be built in between electors, local councillors and local authorities and local spending. If, at the end of the day, a local authority spent too much of the money for which it was accountable to its electors, the electorate would exercise their judgment through the ballot box.

That fundamental principle was supported by the Minister, and for that principle the right hon. Member for Finchley was prepared to give her political life. I suspect that, although they now wish to renege on it, it is the principle on which the Government will founder, because of the way in which they implemented it.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend rightly says that the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was prepared to see her political career founder on the principle of the poll tax. But the author of the poll tax, the man who devised it and based his whole political career on it—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Minister of State—has not been prepared to sacrifice his political life for it.

Dr. Reid: The Minister of State has not graced us with his presence, despite his early role in developing the poll tax. No doubt he has other business elsewhere. I shall not make the same mistake as the Prime Minister and attack him when I do not know where he is. For all I know, he is dining with Her Majesty. Whatever his excuse for being absent tonight, we must ask the hon. Gentleman that fundamental question on this issue.

If the Government were committed to the principle—to which the right hon. Member for Finchley and apparently, because I think I see him nodding in assent, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary are still committed—how does that equate with the capping of local taxation? The matter is fundamentally incompatible. It is not possible to hold to the principle of the local accountability of the electorate on the one hand while saying, on the other, that central Government will dictate the level of local expenditure.

Mr. Dickens: Does the hon. Gentleman recall the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) saying that his council needed community centres, recreation grounds and libraries? Opposition Members blame the Government but why did not Labour councillors provide those facilities when there was a Labour Government? Why have they sat back for so many years and not provided those facilities? Why do Opposition Members suddenly decide that they want them and that the fact that they have not been provided is the Government's fault because we introduced legislation?

Dr. Reid: I was trying to deal with the strategic principles involved, but it is sometimes good to be dragged down to the local town halls to consider the important details. I shall discuss that principle in a moment. I do not suggest that local authorities should have carte blanche to spend Government money. The hon. Gentleman should question my remarks rather than those of other hon. Members. As always, I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) —indeed, I hang on his words. He brought great intelligence and detail to our debate, and none of his comments was incompatible with my arguments.

For the past five years, the Government have been saying that local accountability is the way to solve the problem. Either they believe that that is true, or they believe that the problem will be solved by central Government diktat. There is a fundamental contradiction. It is not a matter of balance or compromise, or of the Government saying that they recognise the dual negotiating roles of local and central Government. If so, although we might not agree entirely with their policy, we might approach it within the same philosophical and practical framework.

No Opposition Member would suggest that an individual, far less whole groups of individuals who constitute local authorities, could possibly be islands unto themselves. That is the difference between Conservative and Opposition Members. We are collectivists and understand that we live in society. We must sometimes cope with an ex-Prime Minister who, 6,000 years after the first settlements in the Mesopotamian valley, still believes that there is no such thing as society. Perhaps that is the view of Conservative Members. We do not believe that individuals are free to have absolute rights, irrespective of the consequences.

We have been asked to accept not a balance between local and central Government but a diktat. It is not in opposition to local government spending willy-nilly: rather, the Government assert that the legislation should pass dictatorial fiscal powers, so that the Secretary of State can decide local authority spending without paying attention to local needs, opinion or democracy. That is not only unjust but also inefficient, because such decisions cannot be made sensibly and efficiently by people with no experience of areas such as mine and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde and for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin).

I mean no personal criticism of the Minister. Let us suppose that the Ministers at the Scottish Office were not malevolent, that they were kind and just men. Even ascribing to them the most gentle, considerate and humane of approaches—if I can hold them in that fantasy world for a second—I do not believe that they could understand

the needs of Springburn, Bellshill or Linwood as they ponder them while walking through the leafy groves of Edinburgh, West or Eastwood.

Perhaps Ministers are flanked by permanent secretaries and civil servants who spend all their time running in and out of Bellshill, Dundee, Springburn or Clelland in the hope of seeing Sydney Devine. I doubt it. I suspect that, cocooned in the Scottish Office, we have Ministers from some of the most affluent areas of Scotland, surrounded by their social superiors, the civil servants, from even more affluent areas of Scotland. They make dictatorial decisions on matters that are vital to some of the most deprived and impoverished areas of Scotland. With the best will in the world, I do not believe that those Ministers, advised by those civil servants, can make decisions that are efficient or fair for local communities such as my own.

Even if a Labour Government were in power, and given our programmes and intentions, which are far better placed to assist constituents in areas such as mine, in all sincerity, we would be handicapped with the same civil servants. We can all learn lessons with the passage of time, and perhaps we could learn from some of the things that the right hon. Member for Finchley did. I am sure that we would not undertake a round of sackings and that we would not be dictatorial, but, in common with any other Government, we would expect to be surrounded by people who are committed to the general framework of our programme.

Even a Labour Government, with a committed programme that would be of far greater assistance to local authorities than that of the Government, would be handicapped if we took to ourselves the type of dictatorial power that the Minister is trying to take tonight. I hope that the Minister will reflect on that, even at this 59th minute of the 11th hour. I hope that, despite the U-turns he has already committed—no doubt it would embarrass him to do any more—he will think about withdrawing the Bill.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): In common with my hon. Friends, I feel that a disservice has been done to local government in recent years by the type of debate that the Government have initiated. We have had much talk about rate capping and local authority overspending, but such talk tends to highlight those authorities with a bad reputation. The Government have tried to give the impression that every authority is like that.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) asked where Labour local authorities were when the Labour Government were in power. It is a matter of public record that when Labour authorities were in power councillors were never out of St. Andrew's house and Whitehall arguing the corner for their cities.

Every stranger who comes to my native city of Glasgow, including hon. Members, says that a fantastic transformation has taken place.

Mr. McKelvey: Not in Easterhouse.

Mr. Martin: A lot of positive things are happening in Easterhouse—tenant co-operatives have been established and it has a swimming pool, which the people of Springburn have wanted for years. Hon. Members who do not come from Glasgow have commented on how fantastic its transformation has been, due to the sandblasting, the garden festival, the waterfront development and the co-operation of the private sector. I hope that Conservative Members will give credit to local authorities that act positively. If they are prepared to hand out criticism, they should be prepared to give credit where it is due.

9.30 pm

Like my hon. Friends, I am worried that if we keep turning the screw on local authorities we will not get in the House the talented men and women from local government that we have had in previous years. If they cannot serve their apprenticeship in local authorities, where will they come from? Many of those who have served the House well have had a good training in local government. I think that I am right in saying that our Prime Minister had experience as a councillor.

Mr. Home Robertson: Not a very good example.

Mr. Martin: Perhaps not, but the point was worth making.

I served as a councillor in the constituency that I represent. Because of the nature of our activities here I cannot point to anything tangible that I have achieved as a Member of Parliament, but in the old ward that I represented I can point to a housing association which is thriving and with whose fights to obtain grants I was involved as a founder member. I can point to play areas and even to simple things such as fences or walls to give elderly people with disabilities more privacy. Over the years almost all councillors were able to point to such achievements—that is, until the Government began their attack on local authorities. The Government are undoing the good work that dedicated men and women did many years ago.

I want to highlight the cases of three councillors who did an excellent job in the city of Glasgow. The first was John Main, who became provost of Glasgow in the late 1960s but who unfortunately died in office. He left school at 14 because his parents could not afford to keep him at school and as a result he was obsessed with seeing that every child in the local authority area had a good education. He worked night and day to see that excellent schools were built in Glasgow.

Councillor Gibb, my second example, was so appalled by the housing in Glasgow that he insisted that we build houses on every gap site. It is said that on a visit to a Glasgow art gallery when he was asked his opinion of a landscape painting he said, "That landscape is fantastic; just think how many houses we could put on it." That shows how obsessed he was with seeing that people were given a decent chance in life.

A colleague of mine named Patrick Trainer, a senior councillor in Strathclyde who recently retired, had the foresight to recognise that since we were becoming more closely involved with the EEC the abattoirs in the city of Glasgow would have to be brought up to a certain standard. He fought tooth and nail to see that that was done and because of his work we have a good market that will be able to cope with 1992.

I mention these people because they and others will not have a chance to leave their mark on local authorities because the Government are stifling them. It is unfair for the Government to put such a restriction on local authorities when the Minister knows that they have statutory obligations and cannot just not spend money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has referred time and again in the

[Mr. Martin]

House to the care of children. Local authorities have a statutory obligation to look after children. Regardless of councils' budgets, if children are in need they must find a home for them and give them food and shelter.

The Government have turned their back on the homeless in our society and that has put more and more pressure on Strathclyde regional social work department and Glasgow district housing department. The Minister also knows that police officers' wages are not negotiated by councillors; they are subject to national negotiation. The city treasurer must keep his or her fingers crossed on the outcome of negotiations in London with the Police Federation.

The matter does not end there, because every local authority worker has a basic wage which has to be negotiated nationally. I know that the Government want to destroy national negotiations, but if they do so the people who will suffer will be the workers in the constituency of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) where there will be high unemployment. Local negotiations will mean a cut in the wages and conditions of hard-working men and women who do not have a good wage to begin with.

I have heard members of the Scottish National party talking about the difficulties of local authorities. They say that the Government should give local autonomy a chance. I do not dispute the view that those who are elected by the community should have a say, but the weakness of the SNP case is demonstrated by the fact that men and women outside Strathclyde came into Strathclyde and told the electorate not to pay the poll tax when the elected councillors were saying, "We do not agree with the poll tax, but if you do not pay it where will the money for the services come from?" That weakens the case of people such as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) who was elected by the people of Dunfermline as a Labour Member of Parliament and has not gone before them to say that, whereas he was elected as a Labour Member, he is no longer a member of that party.

Two things are worrying local councillors, as anyone who speaks to them will know. The first is what the Government are doing at the moment, and the second is that because the poll tax is not coming in they are having to consider shedding labour. Those who knew the consequences of not paying the poll tax, despite their dislike of it—we all disliked it—and call themselves trade unionists should hang their heads in shame. The consequences of their actions will be that men and women in my constituency where unemployment is rife will be forced out of a job.

At one time we had a railway industry which was a big employer, but, because of Government policy which led to the closure of that industry, the only thing the workers had to turn to was local government. Those who were lucky enough to find a job in India street or down in the city chambers were grateful for it. Those who supported the anti-poll tax campaign have not assisted those workers who are out of a job.

The Minister must obviously consider his Department's overall expenditure, because, whatever may be his view of the way in which local authorities handle their affairs, if the councillors give up and—God forbid that this should ever happen—tell the Minister, "Take your services and run them from St. Andrew's house," he will be confronted with even more problems than local authorities have now. He would not do a better job, and the bottom line would be a greater cost to the taxpayer and ratepayer.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): We have just listened to a characteristically powerful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). I thank him for his kind reference to some of the work that I have been doing.

I support amendments Nos. 41, 3, and 46. Unlike other hon. Members who spoke about diminishing local autonomy and democracy, I want to explain why I believe that the amendments will improve clause 2, to the benefit of the more vulnerable people in my constituency.

Amendments Nos. 3 and 46 emphasise the need to protect vulnerable citizens in our communities. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) spoke of the importance of ensuring the welfare of local communities. Amendment No. 3, moved by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), emphasises the importance of providing protection for certain groups. Paragraph (1) states:

> "In determining whether an increase in expenses by a local authority is excessive, the Secretary of State shall have regard to:
>
> (a) The level of unemployment in the area in the preceding three years".

According to Government statistics, unemployment in my constituency is running at 13 per cent., and I see no sign that that dreadful statistic will be alleviated in the near future.

Amendment No. 3 refers also to

> "the condition of the housing stock and the numbers on the housing waiting lists".

The condition of many houses on the lower Clyde is nothing short of disgraceful in terms of damp—let alone the poor quality of materials that were used in the construction of those properties 40, 50 or even 60 years ago. However, Inverclyde district council has been denied assistance by the odd job lot at the Scottish Office and their officials. People come to my surgery to complain about the dampness, which, among other things, presents a very real health hazard—especially to young children and elderly.

Amendment No. 3 refers also to the need to protect those in receipt of income support, one-parent families, and the disabled and handicapped. Strathclyde's social work department seeks to protect the vulnerable in our communities, but its fine, decent work has been severely constrained by Government cuts in the past, and it will be even more damaged in the future. Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 allows social workers to provide financial assistance for families in need. Area teams are involved and the district manager of the social work department is given a budget each year to tide people over for a few days.

Recently, a young woman came to see me with her two young children. She had suffered appalling domestic violence, and was anxious to escape from a psychopathic husband. She needed money to get out of the area and go to close relatives who would protect her. The social work manager, or one of his team, was able to help, and she and her children escaped.

The present Government have cut that budget and will cut it again. Children will be affected. It is important to draw attention to the diminution of local autonomy and democracy that Scottish Office Ministers have inflicted on our communities. We must remember, however, that the

serious damage that they have done to the more vulnerable members of society will go against them come the election: they will be driven out of office, which is what they deserve.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): We shall, of course, follow up the specific points raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and others. First, however, let me address some remarks to the hon. Members for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). I pay genuine tribute to many Scottish councils and councillors, whose work for the community is often not appreciated sufficiently. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, who is not in the Chamber now, will know —as will the hon. Members for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster)—that I have never personally attacked councillors of any political persuasion in either Eastwood district or Renfrew district; and the two districts differ politically.

The question of resources is not the key issue in today's debate; I must point out, however, that aggregate external finance has risen this year by 10·4 per cent.

I confirm that clause 2 would strengthen and widen the Secretary of State's capping powers in Scotland. I believe that that is essential to protect local taxpayers from the excessive spending of local authorities which—or so experience suggests—occurs during a changeover from one local authority finance system to another. This year, many Scottish authorities have set community charges in flagrant disregard of the true interests of their charge payers. That is not true of all local authorities, but it is true of a number.

It must be Government's duty to ensure that the fundamental shift in the balance of taxation brought about by the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 has the intended effect of keeping local taxes down to a reasonable level, and is not used to fund higher spending. The new local level of charges made possible by this measure must be passed on to local people. That is why, in the last year of the community charge system, we are moving to increase central Government's powers to control total expenditure. That is entirely reasonable, although, as the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) pointed out, the new system will involve less accountability.

The hon. Members for Gordon, for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion)—I gather that I am always welcome in Dundee—mentioned trust. Let me confirm that the Secretary of State will make a declaratory statement in the autumn about capping criteria, well ahead of local authorities' setting their budgets. One criticism has been made—*[Interruption.]* I can give hon. Members an absolute assurance that the criteria will be published by the end of November at the latest, and our intention——

Mr. Maxton: Too late.

Mr. Stewart: The authorities do not set their budgets until next January. We will give the information by the end of November, and we hope to do so by the end of October or the middle of November. That is a perfectly reasonable timetable.

Mr. Douglas: We are in a transitional period. A timetable that may have been appopriate in relation to setting budgets in the past is not appropriate given the dislocation that local authorities are suffering. Cannot the Minister reconsider his dates and give the information—in consultation with COSLA, of course—well before the time that he mentioned?

Mr. Stewart: Of course we shall consult COSLA, but we are talking about budgets for 1992-93. We aim to announce and publicise the criteria by the end of October or early November, long before the budgetary process of authorities really gets under way.

Dr. Reid: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: I shall give way, but the House will appreciate that we are pushed for time.

Dr. Reid: The Minister must know that when he talks about October and November, there is a suspicion that he may be putting the decision off further and further because the Government are 6 per cent. behind in the opinion polls. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ten per cent."] Will the hon. Gentleman assure us that, when he reads tomorrow morning in *The Guardian* that they are 10 per cent. behind, we shall not find that his timetable has been postponed until March or even June? Will he confirm that the timetable is final?

Mr. Stewart: That was a risible intervention. I thought that I was being helpful to the House in setting out a reasonable timetable.

I recognise the point that amendment No. 41, the lead Opposition amendment, was intended to draw to the attention of the House, but the yardstick suggested—apart from the fact that it would not take account of any authority already budgeting well in excess of the grant-aided expenditure figure—would not cover the possibility that, as in the current year, inflation could fall sharply between the time that the budgets were set and the start of the year in question. I—and all other local taxpayers—have the right to expect authorities setting their budgets to take into account forecasts of a fall in inflation for the year ahead.

Mr. Maxton: One of the factors built in to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 from the word go was the use of the retail prices index when setting the business rate—the non-domestic rate—in Scotland. What the Minister describes could have happened then. If the principle of using the retail prices index as a guide was right then, why is it wrong now?

Mr. Stewart: The reason for the inflation limit on increases in the business rate was to protect the business community. The limit was, of course, determined by the retail prices index for the year to the previous September. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting a limit based on the current RPI figure in March or April. That figure could move sharply one way of the other in the subsequent year.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) made an extremely well-informed speech. Most of what he said about the client group approach as a basis for determining grant-aided expenditure was right.

Mr. Maxton: An unholy alliance.

Mr. Stewart: There is no unholy alliance. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West was the only person here who took the relevant documents out of the Library for

[Mr. Stewart]

the debate. I can assure him that in taking into account the client group mechanism as the basis for determining GAE, we arrrive at the figures using—as he knows—a large number of indicators. Indeed, all the indicators outlined in the amendment, except those on housing, are taken into account. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow also mentioned housing, but housing expenditure is not strictly relevant because it is determined separately. That applies to amendment No. 46, which is similar but more general. GAE is used as a basis for grant distribution.

I was astonished by some of the attacks that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) made on the grant distribution system. It is agreed through the distribution committee of the local government finance working party——

Mr. O'Brien: What about the level?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member for East Lothian criticised the distribution, not the level. Distribution is agreed by the distribution committee. That technical matter is agreed between COSLA and Scottish Office officials in the light of advice, and the criteria and formulae are constantly re-evaluated. The hon. Member for East Lothian attacked COSLA as much as he attacked the Government.

Lothian's grant-aided expenditure is lower per head than that of regions such as Strathclyde, but it has a lower proportion of school pupils in education authority schools. Compared to Strathclyde, Lothian is relatively prosperous; it is a relatively small, compact region. It does not have sparsely populated areas such as those in Dumfries and Galloway.

The formulae that have been criticised by Opposition Members are agreed by COSLA. They are not imposed and there are clear social differences between Lothian and Strathclyde, which suggest that it is sensible to have higher grant per head for regions such as Strathclyde. Opposition Members have not advanced a formula that could be used by COSLA and Scottish Office officials to change the distribution formulae.

Opposition Members discussed the general policy issues raised by clause 2 but did not offer any clear policy. On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that the previous Labour Government passed section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 to introduce a form of rate capping for excessive and unreasonable expenditure. That is being changed in the Bill, but does the hon. Member for Cathcart support what the previous Labour Government did in Scotland or what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), whom I am glad to see present, said—that there should not be any such powers?

The Opposition are unclear on that central point. In contrast, the Government's position is absolutely clear. Experience shows that local authorities can use the transitional year sharply to increase spending. That must not happen in 1992-93, and under clause 2 it will not happen. The criteria will be clear and will be published well in advance so that local authorities can take them fully into account when setting budgets. The purpose of clause 2 is to give community charge payers in Scotland the same safeguards against excessive spending as people in England and Wales. Those safeguards are necessary. On that basis, I ask hon. Members to resist the amendments and to support clause 2.

Mr. Maxton: We might have expected such a speech from the Minister. Throughout the poll tax fiasco, the cry of the Minister, of the Secretary of State and of Michael Ancram when he was a Minister was that accountability was the purpose of the poll tax. They said that it would make local authorities accountable. I remember raising in debates on schedule 3 to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 exactly the issue that we are debating tonight: why, if the aim of the poll tax was accountability, does the Secretary of State require this power? We were told that it was a reserve power which would never be used. Tonight, the Minister is turning the whole issue on its head and is twisting and turning all his principles to try to get out of a very difficult situation.

It has been an interesting debate. Until the Minister made his contribution, almost the whole debate took place among members of the Opposition parties. Until the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) came to the Chamber, not one——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee reported Progress.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Again considered in Commitee.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Maxton: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] As I was saying before I was interrupted, until the hon. Member for Dumfries walked in at about 9.50 pm not one Scottish Back-Bench Tory debated the issues involved—*[Interruption.]* If the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) had been here instead of going to have his dinner, he would have realised how many members of the Opposition had spoken. It is clear that the Scottish Tory party is not interested in local democracy or in what happens in the local councils. It is concerned only about its own power and its position in Scotland. I should have thought that some Scottish Tories might have been prepared to make a speech in defence of local government in Scotland, because it might be one way to save their seats.

Mr. Home Robertson: Geoffrey Dickens did.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is quite right. The one Back-Bench Tory who spoke during the whole debate was the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). He was not aware that we do not have parish councils in Scotland, but it was interesting that the one short speech made by a Tory Back Bencher was in favour of the amendments. He rightly said that local authorities should decide what they spend, and what services they provide. Why did not other Scottish Tory Members of Parliament also say that?

I am delighted to hear that the Secretary of State will make a declaratory statement—although I have never heard that phrase—about the criteria that are to be used. I assume that such a statement is a statement to the House —or is it something about which I know nothing?

Mr. Allan Stewart: Wait and see.

Mr. Maxton: I am being told to wait and see. The Minister used the term "declaratory statement" in his speech. Will he tell me what it meant? Will it be a statement to the House? It is most interesting that the Secretary of State can make whatever statements he likes to the House about the criteria, but he is under no statutory obligation to stick to them. The distrust in local Government in Scotland of the Secretary of State and of the Minister is such that, whatever they say in the House, those in local government are unlikely to believe them. They know that, when the time comes and when the chips are down, the Ministers will, if necessary change the criteria. We do not want declaratory statements: we want a schedule to the Bill specifying the criteria in statute, so that we can debate them and vote on them, and so that, if necessary, they can be changed. If the criteria were passed in legislation, the Minister would have to stick to them. That will not be the case.

Yet again, the Secretary of State is setting the criteria and saying what is to be considered excessive. The Secretary of State has the power. Nobody else is to be involved in the whole decision-making process. The Secretary of State is now taking power into his own hands, which makes a mockery of local democracy, and of the rights of people in Scotland to decide what they want and how they take decisions. The debate is about local democracy and about accountability. That is why I want to force the amendment to a vote, and I ask my hon. Friends to join me in doing so.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Douglas: Many hon. Members have not come in to listen to the debate and they have not heard the inadequate reply by the Minister. I asked a specific question about grant-aided expenditure, and about the criteria. It is evident from the Minister's inadequate reply that the Secretary of State intends to use a device that is for the purposes of capping. The Minister's reply suggests that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is right and that we are moving in the direction that it has described. That move should be deplored.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 286.

Division No. 165] **[10.7 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan

Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones, and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Committee divided: Ayes 284, Noes 212.

Division No. 166] **[10.19 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*

Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Trunk Roads (Leicestershire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.33 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I welcome the opportunity to raise the concern, anxiety and anger of my constituents about the road system in Leicester and its effect on my fellow citizens' quality of life. I have arrived in great haste from a packed public meeting at the Judgemeadow community college, Marydene drive, in Leicester. The meeting was called by the county council to consider the public response to the proposals for the eastern district distributor road that will pass through the Colemand and Evington wards of my constituency. Together with the A46-A47 link road, they will directly affect the lives of 16,000 people in Leicester, East.

I am grateful to the local residents of Leicester who have, in the past few years, fashioned impeccable arguments against that road and in favour of a trunk road round Leicester—people such as Arthur Padmore who, two decades ago, as a local councillor, chaired meetings against it. Thanks is also due to Frank Kerr, Sue Chapman, Walter Lindsay, Val Jones, John Thomas and others who have either initiated petitions or convened meetings. Special thanks goes to Councillors Mike Preston, Mary Draycott and Stewart Foster. Tenants, residents, parents, school children, vicars, head teachers and pensioners have all joined in our protest.

Today is the fourth anniversary of my election to the House. I first raised this issue in my maiden speech. Since then, petitions to Parliament, lobbies and other activities have been undertaken. The Minister will recall that I met him about this matter and I met his predecessor. They courteously told me that, in the first instance, the scheme was a matter for the local authority. However, after hearing the arguments, I hope that the Minister will realise that the only way in which to alleviate the hardship and anxiety of the people of Leicester, East is the creation of a trunk road around, but not inside, Leicester. Additional Government funding must be made to help the local authority achieve that.

Leicester has the privilege of holding the title of "Environment City", yet its road system, the traffic congestion and the noise and pollution from that traffic threatens to destroy the environmental nirvana that good people and an energetic city council have sought to create.

I am sorry to say that some county council members and the officers they instruct are crazy about roads. If they see a trafic problem they create a new road. The people who want to put the new road through do not live in the area. They do not shop there, they do not send their children to the local schools and they do not worship there. They are oblivious to the catastrophe that they are going to create.

From its inception the entire route has been opposed. It has been made clear time and time again that the road system will not cope with the proposed traffic flow, that the structure of houses will have to be strengthened and made safe and that the route roads and the roads off them already deserve a reduction in traffic flows, not an increase.

What are the consequences of the scheme? There is no need for the local people to be handed a crystal ball as they know what the future will be like. Their lives will simply not be the same again. By the fime the route reaches the junction of Colchester road and Uppingham road, 22,000 vehicles a day will be travelling along it. From the stretch from St. Joseph's church to the junction of Wicklow drive and Westmeath road, the number of vehicles increases from the present level of 12,000 to 22,000 a day. From the junction of Wicklow drive to Colman road the current level of 9,000 vehicles a day increases to 18,000. From Colman road to the junction of Ethel road and Main street the current level of 9,000 vehicles a day rises to an estimated 23,000. From Main street down to Biggin Hill road the number goes up from 3,000 to 18,000. The number of vehicles that will join the A6 from Biggin Hill road will increase to 25,000.

The local authority has failed miserably to get its act together. It has constructed stage 1 of the A46-A47 link road at a cost of £2·1 million. It is now embarrassed because people are pulling their trotters and saying that it is a road that goes nowhere. If the residents of Hungerton boulevard had their way, it would point straight at Glenfield and right into the plush office of the dapper Mr. Tommy Thompson, the director of planning and transportation.

Last Sunday, the residents of Hungerton boulevard and Hotoff road joined me and the residents of Abbotts road and Scruptoff lane in a march along the route which was organised by Mr. Trevor Merby. That quiet and unassuming stretch of road is to become the Brands Hatch of the midlands. The residents of Hungerton boulevard have a loaded gun pointed at them, yet they have not been told dates, places or times of events or even how much of their gardens they will have to give up.

The situation for the residents of Abbotts road is much more dramatic. After being told for years that the route would go behind their gardens and through the land owned by the Leicester clinic, the residents discovered that the county council had decided to put it through their road. In the history of local democracy in Leicester, this will be remembered as a famous breach of faith. The residents and I will not permit a unilateral change to satisfy the egos of those who work in county hall. Abbotts road and the dogleg into Scruptoff lane is already a busy road and it will not be able to handle 20,000 vehicles a day. The residents' response will be an emphatic no. Nor are the Colchester road residents the least bit impressed by the council's assurances that the road will be improved to cope with the traffic. How is one supposed to cope with a permanent headache?

It is said that Colchester road looks like a road purpose-built for an orbital road round Leicester. The residents of Colchester road think differently. They think that it is fine as it is. The Goodwood road versus Spencifield lane debate is a disgraceful attempt to divide my constituency and drive a wedge between residents who have already campaigned on the same side. It is grossly incompetent of the council to wait until now to ask people their views; and the council now proposes—the Minister knows this because I raised it with him at a meeting—either a dual carriageway down Goodwood road, which will mean the demolition of 127 houses, or a single carriageway down that road with the heavy goods vehicles going down Spencifield lane.

I shall deal first with Goodwood road. It is already busy and dangerous. It cannot cope with a doubling of the traffic on it. The noise is so appalling that people cannot sleep at night. For the 127 people whose houses are at risk of demolition, the anxiety must be overwhelming. Theirs is

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

a priority view, no matter what the residents feel elsewhere, since it is they who will have to go through the harrowing experience of losing their homes. Some of them have already stated that they would rather go elsewhere than stay there because the road has become so busy. They should be listened to and their views should be acted upon.

We shall not tolerate any increased traffic along Spencifield lane. I and local people, including local councillors have discussed the large volume of traffic already on Spencifield lane. There are two schools in this very residential area, and we have already brought to the council's attention the traffic difficulties associated with feeder roads such as Downing drive. If either of these routes is chosen the other will suffer because smaller connecting roads will be used as rat runs and residents will be continually harassed.

Finally, Biggin Hill road is also on the route. The residents of this tiny cul-de-sac face the awesome prospect of a road running through their road which will carry 25,000 vehicles. They must wonder what on earth they have done to deserve that.

The cost of the scheme has reached staggering proportions. The cost of the A46-A47 link road is now £4·6 million, excluding any compensation that will have to be paid to residents. The cost of the eastern district distributor road is put at between £12 million and £14 million, depending on which option is chosen.

Alternatives have already been advanced. They would take the traffic and the misery outside the city. The proposals accept the need to ease the worries of people who live on Humberstone drive without the need to allow this traffic to be imposed on other local people. The road would go out of the city boundary at Thurky Grange and over the land at the back of Delaware road and Newhaven road. That route would keep the heavy goods vehicles and ordinary traffic well away from built-up areas, and it would not rejoin the main route until it reached Stoughton road.

This is just one of the proposals. In my view, the highly paid officers at county hall are paid their high salaries to propose alternatives, not to choose the most convenient way out. The Minister can help us out of this problem. He can authorise and support the idea of a trunk road round Leicester. The Government's White Paper suggested the idea of an eastern bypass. He has told me in the past that he has not been approached by the local community for support for the scheme. I have a mandate from tonight's meeting and from the people of Leicester, East to ask him to reconsider the position.

Mr. Ken Arkley, the county engineer, prompted by tonight's public meeting, has informed us that the Department of Transport has not yet commissioned a study. Will the Minister please commission a study into the proposals for an eastern bypass? Any alternative would cost more money. The Minister knows that from the meetings that we have had. Will he please meet a delegation, led by myself, of local councillors and county officers who will make the case for additional funding for an alternative route round Leicester? An extra £3 million or so will provide a long-term solution. Will he confirm that money would be forthcoming if the county made out a strong case?

The route has been dubbed the road to nowhere. In fact, it is the road to ruin. It will ruin the lives of 16,000 people in my constituency. It is high time that the county council stopped treating the eastern part of Leicester and its road transport system as though it were an expensive Lego set to be created and dismantled at will. It is time that they stopped playing politics with people's lives. It is time that they gave local people a firm timetable with firm proposals which will take the traffic out of the city of Leicester and out of residential areas.

Delay and uncertainty are the enemy of progress. If the county council does not put these people first, we shall be in a bare-knuckle fight to make them listen and act on the views of local people, because these are the people whose views should count. We look to the Minister for support in this endeavour.

10.46 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): This has been an interesting, albeit short, debate, because we have heard the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) arguing for even more investment in the trunk road system. I see him nodding in agreement with that. I am sure that that point will not be lost on the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who has announced that there would be a moratorium on the Government's trunk road building programe should there ever be a Labour Government. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to report tonight's proceedings to his constituents and to tell them that there is but one political party that is unequivocally committed to continuing to investment in the capital infrastructure of our road system —the Conservative party, which I am proud to represent.

The Government have had a good record on providing resources for trunk roads in and around Leciester, not within the city itself, because within the city the roads are not trunked. In the last financial year, some £62 million was spent by the Department of Transport on constructing trunk road improvement schemes in Leicestershire. That represents almost 50 per cent. of all such expenditure in the east midlands in the same period, and is a measure of the importance that the Department and the Government attach to the road infrastructure in Leicestershire.

Since the subject of the Adjournment debate is trunk roads in Leicester, I do not intend to respond in detail to the points about the local roads in Leicester, for which the Government are not responsible. On the trunk roads in Leicestershire and the programme for the future, the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" announced that we would spend some £3·5 billion on improving the capacity of the motorway network, and one of the most important parts of that network is the M1 where it runs through Leicestershire. That is now the subject of a consultants' study to see what is the best system of widening between junctions 19 and 23A.

That scheme will be expensive, but when it is completed, it will play an important part in the regeneration of employment opportunities in Leicestershire. The area east of junction 21 has been identified by Leicestershire county council's structure plan as the motorway's employment area. That emphasises the point often made by the Government—that the provision of a good roads infrastructure is often an essential part of providing employment opportunities.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are many other schemes in the Department's programmes. I will not describe them all, but the Market Harborough bypass is under construction and is going well, and we are working on the £31 million dual-carriageway Quorn-Mountsorrel bypass.

We have already announced that we will include in the trunk road programme a study of the eastern bypass. That will go out to consultants shortly. When the design commission is awarded later this month or next month, it will be possible for the consultants to investigate the points that the hon. Gentleman raised tonight.

The eastern bypass scheme is well down the list in the programme. It is one of the last for which we shall be appointing consultants, and it takes a lower place in the order of priorities than many other schemes. Its estimated cost is about £45 million, so it is very dependent on a continuing commitment to the "Roads for Prosperity" programme that this Government support, but which could be jeopardised were another party to take office.

Mr. Vaz: I am glad to hear that the study has gone out to consultants. Can the Minister give a rough timetable for when he envisages that the consultants will begin reporting? Does he accept that one of the problems about spending a lot of money on the link road and distributor road is that it will be wasted if the bypass is subsequently constructed? Will the Minister meet a delegation from Leicestershire county council to hear the arguments for the case that the scheme in question should have a higher place on the Government's agenda? We appreciate that there are many schemes before the Minister, but will he listen to the views of local people, through their elected officials? Will he listen to the argument that, if the scheme had greater priority, that could save money on the link road that is currently being created?

Mr. Chope: If the hon. Gentleman wants to arrange a delegation to discuss a new road scheme, I shall be happy to meet it. I will not prejudge the case, and I will listen to the arguments. However, I understand that the eastern bypass, which would link the A46 and the A6, is not an alternative to doing something about the amount of traffic in the urban area of eastern Leicester. I am informed that anything from 15,000 vehicles a day upwards are using the route of the proposed eastern distributor road and the link road to which the hon. Gentleman referred earlier.

Of that traffic, Leicestershire county council, which is the highways authority, estimates that 85 vehicles in every 100 are locally generated traffic. If that is so—I have no reason to doubt that statistic—the eastern bypass will not resolve that problem. Any urban community must face up to the fact that, if an enormous amount of traffic is generated within that community and wants to move around within the city, it is useful to have proper channels for it. That has been the county council's strategy, although it is a matter for local people to resolve among themselves; it is not for me to intervene.

Mr. Vaz: That was the point of tonight's local meeting. It was clear that people believed that, if a survey and study commissioned by the Department of Transport were carried out, the figures could be changed. They were not satisfied that the council's figures—which are several years old—were still accurate.

Will the Minister confirm that it is Government policy to move roads outside cities, rather than causing more congestion by adopting a broad policy of putting more roads inside city areas?

Mr. Chope: Certainly it is the Government's policy to invest in the inter-urban network, which primarily means motorways and trunk roads. That policy has been very successful: it has taken a good deal of traffic off less suitable roads. Within a conurbation, however, traffic often needs to get from one side of the city to another. That is why, under the system whereby we provide a 50 per cent. transport supplementary grant, many local authorities present bids for urban schemes dealing with traffic that has been generated within that urban locality and wishes either to leave the city centre for the motorway network, or to come back in, or to travel from one point to another within the city.

It is in that context that the link road, and, within Leicester, the distributor road that was to go right around the inner ring of Leicester, were conceived many years ago. The road has largely been built, although there are two missing parts. It is not for me to assess whether the strategy was right; but, if we were to build an eastern bypass for Leicester, it would certainly be much further out than the existing line of the distributor road.

I do not think that the amount of traffic that such a bypass would take that would otherwise use a distributor road is significant enough to suggest that this is a viable alternative. The eastern road is needed in its own right, as part of the inter-urban network. I leave it to the people of Leicester, and Leicestershire, to decide among themselves whether they want to proceed with any traffic relief within the Leicester conurbation.

It is always easy for those living in a city to say, "All our problems can be resolved if the road building is carried out outside the city"—or, in the case of the hon. Member for Leicester, East, outside his constituency. That is always an attractive argument, but I do not think that it is necessarily always practical: much of the traffic is generated within a city. That is why, to remove congestion and pollution and improve the quality of life of those who choose to live in cities, we must continue to invest in road infrastructure in the city centres.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister consider an increase in traffic from 9,000 to 20,000 vehicles a day an improvement in people's quality of life?

Mr. Chope: It depends on which people the hon. Gentleman means. People do not normally travel in motorised transport unless they have chosen freely to do so. Fewer people still own cars in this country than in most other European countries, and I detect no suggestion that the people of Leicester, or anywhere else, have said that they do not want to buy motor vehicles in the future, or to invest in their own personal transport.

I understand that, this very evening, the hon. Gentleman chose to travel by car from his constituency to the House to be in time for the debate. He used the motorway network, although there is a very good train service between Leicester and London. I would guess that he did that to gain the extra flexibility of being able to travel directly by car from the place where his meeting took place on to the M1, proceed to London, and then come straight into the House of Commons car park. I am

[Mr. Chope]

sure that many people in Leicester, as elsewhere, will be pleased to know that the hon. Gentleman uses road transport and is not in any way prejudiced against the car.

Mr. Vaz: I can confirm that I am not prejudiced against the car. I got here by car, as the Minister said. But for local residents who live near roads—whether they be trunk roads or roads inside cities—such an increase in the volume of traffic must be bound to affect the quality of life. Does not the Minister agree with that proposition?

Mr. Chope: If one lives by the side of a road, an enormous increase in the volume of traffic on that road will obviously affect one's quality of life. That is why many people in Leicester have argued in favour of the road scheme to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. Others have argued against it. People's reaction depends on whether they think that there will be benefits or disbenefits affecting them directly. Those are matters for local political resolution, and I should not wish to try to deal with local road controversies, because the Department of Transport has enough difficulty already in trying to deal with the national road schemes.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that the eastern bypass of Leicester is in the national scheme and we are in the process of appointing consultants on it. I look forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman and others from Leicester to discuss and hear about the suggestions that it might be a solution to all the traffic problems in Leicester.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 12 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Review

1. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the local government review will include possible structures for London.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): The consultation document published on 23 April said that the Government have no plans to change the general structure of local government in London and the metropolitan county areas.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend recall that the late and unlamented Greater London council, when Labour dominated, doubled the rates, doubled the fares for Londoners on London transport in 1984, and continually increased the rates by huge margins as well as giving grants to deviant groups and all sorts of unworthy causes? Does he agree that we must not return to anything like the GLC?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that my hon. Friend is right. The Government have no intention of recreating the GLC, which spent most of its time undermining the confidence and credibility of London as a great world city.

Mr. Tony Banks: I must tell the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that he is now off the list for the first reception of the Greater London Authority.

Has the Secretary of State had a chance to study the report which I understand came out yesterday showing that mayors in British towns work longer hours and put in more effort than mayors around the rest of the world? We all acknowledge the work that they put in. I understand that the right hon. Gentleman was very much in favour of the idea of a directly elected mayor for London. Does he still favour that proposal? If he does, would he be prepared to meet me to study my completely worked up proposal and scheme, which includes the odd name that I have in mind for the job?

Mr. Heseltine: The House will know that I spend a great deal of time thinking about the way in which we can improve and encourage the partnership between local and central government. It has been a source of some concern to me today to discover that three items on my desk consist of inquiries into corruption in Hackney, of Lambeth sending out bills including the £140 because it cannot collect the community charge, and of worries about internecine warfare in the Labour party in Liverpool—hardly an encouragement to those of us trying to advocate the cause of local government in this country.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Is the Secretary of State aware that the local government reorganisation of 1963-64 was deeply resented in many Conservative parts of London which want to return to the original boundaries and that there is no way in which the right hon. Member for Brent, North, being guided by his constituents, can support the Government on local government until we are given the right to return to a separate Wembley and Willesden? The same applies to other areas of London where we are putting at risk Conservative seats under Labour authorities.

Mr. Heseltine *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Speak for Neasden!"] I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) feels strongly about these matters. Having looked at the reorganisation on which we were already embarked in the non-metropolitan areas and outside London, however, the Government felt that the task that we had set ourselves was a large one which would lead to the prospect of a larger number of unitary authorities and we did not want to extend those proposals at this time.

Mr. Gould: I imagine that the Secretary of State is also concerned about the fraud squad inquiry into Conservative-controlled Bromley. May I press him a little harder on the question of London and give him a further opportunity to snub the people of London, who have shown by an overwhelming majority that they demand a London-wide voice for Londoners and their city? Will the right hon. Gentleman come to the Dispatch Box and explain why he insists on denying that to them?

Mr. Heseltine: The most graphic example of why I am so sceptical of anything that smacks of the GLC is that it fell to my responsibility and to that of the Government to cope with the 6,000 acres of dereliction in the east end of London which were a direct product of the fact that the land was owned by nationalised industries and suffocated by a combination of east end Labour boroughs and the GLC.

Mr. Tracey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the London unitary authorities, the London boroughs, will be the model to be followed in the rest of the country, and that that will probably be the view of much of the country when he has completed his consultations? Does he also agree that the so-called lean and hungry super-tier authority suggested by some people would soon become a fat and useless body?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, as he has much experience of this matter. I have another concern, however. The Labour party believes that it would control that authority, but it would use it not to enhance London's reputation, but to undermine it. It would use it as a source of continued controversy between local authorities and central Government, and would exploit every considerable disadvantage that it could find to diminish the reputation of the capital city and not to enhance it.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

2. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to meet the chief executive of Nirex to discuss the strategy for disposal of nuclear waste.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Mr. Wallace: May I suggest to the Minister that his right hon. Friend should make time available to see the managing director of Nirex, Mr. McInerney, especially in the light of the Secretary of State's recent statement that a decision will soon be made to use Sellafield for the disposal of intermediate and low-level waste? That being so, does the Minister agree that Nirex should wind up its operation at Dounreay, and end the blight that has been affecting the highlands and islands for so long? If the Minister is not prepared to do that, will he at least take this opportunity to knock on the head any suggestion that Dounreay is a potential site for high-level radioactive waste?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman's opinions are well known, and I have heard them expressed in the House on several occasions. I ask him to be a little more patient. Although he wishes to draw me on the issue, he knows that it is for Nirex to make proposals. No decision to abandon Dounreay in favour of a development at Sellafield can be taken until Nirex's reports are in the Government's hands and the results of the site investigations are obtained, which I understand will be at the end of this year.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that the visitor centre at Sellafield, and the efforts of British Nuclear Fuels and Nirex to explain their policies on reprocessing and disposal, have gone a long way to dispel public anxiety? Does he also agree that much more should be done to explain the general proposals to the public so as to remove any fears in the future?

Mr. Trippier: I have no difficulty at all in agreeing with my hon. Friend's second point. On his first point, I have visited the centre at Sellafield on three occasions and I, too, am impressed with the service that it provides.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Minister agree that the atomic authorities are being forced to explore the possibility of an underground repository for spent fuel and nuclear waste in Sellafield because the Government find it politically embarrassing to allow those authorities to explore better geological sites for that purpose elsewhere in the country?

Mr. Trippier: I have to disagree with the hon. Gentleman. It was perfectly clear that the two sites on what may be described as the shortlist were Dounreay and Sellafield. Much time and effort went into the work of producing that shortlist and carrying out the investigations. Both sites are being considered, and the report on the investigations should be in our hands by December.

Rents-to-Mortgages Scheme

3. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans are being made to enable council tenants to convert rents to mortgages.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): Experimental schemes are now in operation for new town tenants in Basildon and Milton Keynes. Primary legislation is needed to extend the rents-to-mortgages scheme to council tenants. We will consider this in the light of the results of the pilot schemes.

Mrs. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that allowing council tenants to buy their homes under the right-to-buy scheme was a very popular piece of legislation? We have given tenants what they want, but some tenants need further assistance. I welcome the experiment to date, and I hope that as soon as possible we shall extend the provision so that all tenants will have the opportunity to buy their homes.

Because of the Labour party's opposition to tenants, in often not wanting them to buy their homes, it has incorporated deplorable delaying tactics. Will the Minister ensure, if and when he introduces the legislation, that tenants can buy their homes immediately and that thousands of pounds of rent will not be wasted while the transaction is taking place?

Mr. Yeo: I agree with my hon. Friend, who makes an important point. I am sorry to say that, even today, in the boroughs of Lambeth and Hackney disgraceful obstacles are put in the way of tenants trying to exercise their right to buy.

I am glad to say that the rents-to-mortgages experiment is going extremely well. I expect the first completions to take place later this month. It is an important extension of tenants' rights. I shall be interested to see whether the Labour party overcomes its hostility to allowing council tenants to become home owners more quickly under the rents-to-mortgages scheme than under the right-to-buy scheme.

Mr. Soley: Given that one in nine homeless families are in that position as a result of mortgage repossession, would it not be more intelligent for the Government, having created the housing crisis and lost 1.5 million tenancies from the rented sector, to introduce a mortgage rescue scheme? That has been suggested not only by the Labour party but by many housing experts outside. In doing that, should not the Government reform housing finance to make it easier for tenants not only to step up to home ownership but to step down again to renting when they find themselves in difficulties? Why does the Minister not end his desperate search for a policy, adopt our policy and use it sensibly?

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman's grasp of housing issues is tenuous at the best of times, but this time he has allowed his prejudices to submerge his intelligence to an even greater extent than usual. It has obviously not occurred to him that the whole purpose of the rents-to-mortgages scheme is to avoid the circumstances in which tenants are tempted to enter into commitments that they cannot afford. The scheme will allow a tenant to purchase a share of his property, without increasing his weekly outgoings, by substituting for his weekly rental payment a weekly mortgage payment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend consider suggesting to all housing authorities that they publish an illustrative list of flats and houses, with the prices that people would expect to have to pay, given the buyer's age, the valuation of the house or flat and the length of time for

which the buyer has been a tenant, as many people do not realise that they could buy their flats for less than £17,000 and save money by so doing?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend has made an interesting point, and I shall certainly follow up his suggestion. It is clear that a significant number of people are still trapped in the tyranny of tenancy and would like to escape from it. If they understood the favourable terms on which the Government have made it possible for them to do so, I am sure that they would take advantage of the opportunity.

Environmental Labelling

5. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when a system of green labelling approved by the Government will be operating in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heseltine: An official eco-labelling scheme should become operational in 1992.

Mr. Bennett: Is the Secretary of State aware that many people would like to buy products that are as environmentally friendly as possible, but find it difficult because of the wide range of supermarket claims that this or that product is environmentally friendly? Many people have been conned by some of those claims in recent years, and unless a national labelling system is introduced very soon their willingness to purchase such products will steadily decline.

Mr. Heseltine: The public at large are, I think, well aware that significant retailers and manufacturers have taken advantage of the public's appetite for green, environmentally friendly products and introduced their own green labelling systems. It is appropriate that a standard system should operate across the European Community, and that known quality tests should be applied. That is why the British Government are pressing so hard, and why we hope to achieve a European eco-labelling system this year. If we do not, our determination is such that we shall have to proceed with our own national scheme.

Mr. Allason: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a standard labelling system is needed to indicate not just the contents of a package but the manufacture of the package itself? Does he also agree that the standardised system should extend to the composition of the contents? There may be considerable differences, and it can be misleading for the consumer reading the label, who may not realise that there is a percentage difference as well as a weight difference.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has made important but detailed points. They are precisely the sort of constructive suggestions that we shall wish to consider when preparing our proposals—or when implementing our determination to agree European proposals.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Will non-disposable plastic labels be used, or the more environmentally acceptable paper labels?

Mr. Heseltine: As the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate, eco-labelling is not just a matter of the composition of labels but a means of conveying to a wide public the contents of the products that those labels seek to describe, but it would, of course, be a major step forward if the labels were made of recyclable material.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Most people will be pleased to hear the Secretary of State today commit himself to introducing an eco-labelling scheme in 1992, but I remind him that many people will treat that with some scepticism, given that on 21 March 1990 in column 1114 of *Hansard* his predecessor promised that if an eco-labelling scheme was not in place on an EC basis or at least agreed by the end of that year we would go into action with one of our own. It is now June 1991 and we do not have an EC scheme or a national scheme. Will the Minister stress the fact that we shall indeed have a scheme at the end of the current year, or is that just a repeated bogus claim?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the hon. Gentleman will discover that the original commitment was to introduce a scheme by the end of 1991, although he is absolutely right that we have not achieved that. The original commitment was for 1991, but the essence of the dilemma is simple—whether to proceed with a national scheme, with the risk that we shall have to change it all relatively quickly when a European scheme takes its place, or to use the good offices of the British Government to ensure that we get an eco-labelling scheme throughout Europe as quickly as possible.

Local Government Review

6. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made on consultation with local authorities concerning reorganisation.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): The Government's consultation paper on local government structure has been circulated widely and comments are being received. I expect a large number of responses as the deadline approaches.

Mr. Haynes: Will the consultation with local authorities on the setting up of the commission mean that local authorities will be properly consulted for their views? Bearing in mind the mess that the Government have made of the local economy—*[Interruption.]* It is a real mess, a right cock-up. When will that commission be reporting so that we know exactly what is to happen?

Mr. Portillo: The consultation paper has been circulated to all the principal local authorities. I have no complaints about that, and they are responding individually and through their associations, so there is no problem with consultation. The local government commission will be established by a Bill which the Government will introduce in the autumn.

Mrs. Roe: As my hon. Friend is aware, London's Metropolitan police authority boundary extends beyond the Greater London area into counties such as Hertfordshire. Will he ensure that when the local government commission reviews the structure of local government it will also consider whether the Hertfordshire constabulary boundary should include the whole of the county and not merely part of it?

Mr. Portillo: It is important that the local government commission should consider that sort of issue, and that Ministers should not jump to conclusions before the

legislation to establish that commission has even been introduced. I know that when the commission is established my hon. Friend's important views on the matter will help to guide it as to the sort of questions that it ought to be considering.

Mr. O'Brien: The review of local government proposed by the Secretary of State will overlap with some of the proposals in the Widdicombe report, especially the role of the elected member. How does the Secretary of State intend to resolve that and, in doing so, will he note and act on the views, observations and concerns expressed by local authorities?

Mr. Portillo: A large number of recommendations in the Widdicombe report have already been brought into effect or will be shortly. There will be some overlap, although I think that the most important areas of overlap will be not so much with the Green Paper that has been published as with the Green Paper that is yet to be published on questions of internal management. The Government will wish to take careful account of the representations made in support of what has been done under the Widdicombe proposals and, conversely, the views of people who think that the Widdicombe reforms go in the wrong direction and believe that we can do better in future.

Mr. Alton: In the discussions with local authorities, will the Minister say what rights of redress will be provided for the citizens of cities such as Liverpool, where in some areas bins have not been emptied for the past 13 weeks? What does he intend to do to assist community charge payers in places like Liverpool, who have been called to pay an additional £70·99 in poll tax for people who did not pay the poll tax last year? Does not that run contrary to any question of natural justice?

Mr. Portillo: I am appalled by those local authorities that, through ineptness, inefficiency or lack of will, have failed to collect community charge and are now asking law-abiding citizens to bear that burden. Those citizens have every right to be angry with their local authorities and to express their feelings most strongly through the ballot box. We have tackled the question of the standards that we can expect from local authorities through the introduction of greater choice and competition for citizens within local authorities with the extension of compulsory competitive tendering. I agree with the spirit of the hon. Gentleman's question, that we need to go further to enfranchise more citizens so that they can have redress against local authorities which underperform. That is an important part of the consideration of the citizens' charter to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is giving a great deal of attention.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend hurry up and get on with the reorganisation, because those of us who live in Cleveland are fed up with a local authority in which the leader has thrown the chairman of the county council out of his civic suite to obtain greater aggrandisement, and in which today the council is trying to fiddle competitive tendering in order to charge an additional £2 million to the people of the county? The council has already wasted nearly £1 million—and it will continue to spend money —on a would-be light rapid-transport system. It has also gone out of its way to hurt a schoolboy's chances of playing football for his county.

Mr. Portillo: To pick just one of the very justifiable complaints that my hon. Friend makes, the Government are extremely concerned about those local authorities that cheat on compulsory competitive tendering and try to deprive their residents of the benefits of competition and choice. One of the points on which we are strongly focused is ensuring that we provide a level playing field so that compulsory competitive tendering works effectively and brings the benefits of competition and choice to our citizens.

Severn Estuary

7. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent consultations he has had with the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the designation of the Severn estuary mudflats as a special protection area under the European Community wild birds directive.

Mr. Trippier: None. My right hon. Friend is considering the case for the designation of the Severn estuary as a special protection area.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that it is nothing short of a scandal that, as a result of the Government's dithering, the proposed special protection area for the Severn estuary mudflats, along with another 160 proposed special protection areas, has been sitting in the Minister's pending tray for more than a year at vast expense in Ministers' and civil servants' time and in time spent in consultation with landowners? Yet still the Minister will not take the decision to designate the mudflats under a directive which is now 10 years old. Does he agree that if he does not do something soon, the Government's name in Europe will be "mudflats"?

Mr. Trippier: I totally reject all that the hon. Gentleman has suggested—it cannot be dithering or time wasting. The hon. Gentleman has, probably unintentionally, misled the House, because the papers for the designation were submitted to us by the NCC only a few months ago.

Mr. Soames: With regard to that designation, and to others from Europe, will my hon. Friend confirm that he and his colleagues in the European Community will be taking a good deal of interest in ensuring that it is understood that not every estuary in Britain is the same, and that great care and attention needs to be given on an individual basis and not just on a blanket one? Will he assure the House that he is using his best endeavours to ensure that the European departments involved are aware of those differences?

Mr. Trippier: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with every word that he said. In the past, I have had the opportunity to raise this very matter with other Ministers at the European Environment Council. It is a matter of record that I share my hon. Friend's views on this. No two estuaries are the same, and they cannot be treated in the same way for nature protection purposes.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Minister aware that there is considerable concern that the time it takes to make a designation that protects an estuary is so much longer than the time it takes for developers to work up an advanced plan that will ruin the estuary? Conservation interests do not appear to be properly upheld by the Government. Is it

true that when Ministers met the representatives of wildlife organisations a few weeks ago, Ministers made it clear that they were not interested in a common estuaries policy, which was a great disappointment to those whom they met.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman's latter point is totally wrong. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I attended the meeting to which he referred. My right hon. Friend asked the non-governmental organisations to submit in finer detail precisely what they expect from Ministers in the Department of the Environment. At no time did the Secretary of State suggest that we were prepared to go for a full-blown review of coastal policy. The matter now lies in the hands of the NGOs, which I am sure will respond positively.

Estate Action Programme

8. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the amount spent on the estate action programme in 1990-91 and the budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Heseltine: The budget for 1990-91 was £190 million. We shall not know how much of this has been spent until local authorities finalise their end-of-year accounts. The budget for 1991-92 is £268 million.

Mr. Squire: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on figures which, at first sight, seem to show a 40 per cent. increase. Does he agree that some of the worst estates in the country, usually under the tender control of the Labour party, are being transformed by the expenditure? Some people in the worst possible housing conditions are having those conditions relieved. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a good example of a caring Government directing money to where it is needed?

Mr. Heseltine: The whole House recognises that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has made a significant effort to improve the allocation of those resources to the most acutely stressful estates. I am sure that the House will also recognise our determination to deal with the serious problems of those deprived estates, not the least of which is that systematically, year after year, they have been used to concentrate the most difficult families and allowed to deteriorate in the most appalling circumstances under Labour authorities.

Mr. Lewis: Is not the Secretary of State aware that such programmes distort the whole business of planning in local authorities? Out-of-city estates, which share inner-city problems, have been totally ignored not by local authorities, but by the Secretary of State. Does he agree that his latest wheeze of a Dutch auction for funds will exacerbate the problems?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman does not completely understand the issue. The basis on which most of the revival policy is set was the restoration of the Cantril Farm estate, which is now Stockbridge Village Trust. That estate has been transformed by the policies of the Government.

The hon. Gentleman took issue with the allocation of funds, but if any of the authorities eligible for our new city challenge wishes to submit a proposal for restoring an out-of-town, overspill estate it will be eligible for treatment, as it is already through the estate action programme.

Mr. Dickens: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Littleborough and Saddleworth we have an estate called the Holts estate? Last year, it applied for some money through the estate action programme. It is desperately in need of help as it has been sorely neglected. It is within the metropolitan borough of Oldham. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that when that application is resubmitted, he will give it serious consideration?

Mr. Heseltine: I should find it impossible to resist my

Local Government Finance

9. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his proposed total standard spending for local authorities for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): My right hon. Friend expects to make this announcement, as usual, in July.

Mr. Michie: What ceiling do the Government envisage for spending next year, bearing in mind the Government's commitment yesterday to placing the capped authorities and their alignment of money which the Government hope will match the council tax guesstimates for local community needs?

Mr. Key: This year, total standard spending was £39 billion, which is an increase on 1990-91 of about 19 per cent. We are still considering the pressures that will fall on local authorities' spending in 1992-93. We have discussed the matter with local government representatives and we shall continue to do so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: When considering the standard spending assessment for 1992-93, will the Minister bear in mind the point that has repeatedly been made by me and Lancaster and Wyre borough councils —that the all-ages social index works very savagely against boroughs such as ours? Will he consider the composition of that index and the weighting within it?

Mr. Key: Yes, I am delighted to give that assurance to my hon. Friend. We shall carefully consider that matter. We have already received representations from other councils and we shall listen carefully. If my hon. Friend has particular representations that she would like to make, I should be very glad to see her to discuss them.

Mr. Blunkett: As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) said, yesterday the capping rules were spelt out in such a way that the proposed council tax figures that were guessed at a couple of months ago are to be applied to spending limits. Will the Government spell out how they intend to do that with the figures that they are to use for next year? In particular, can the Government say whether they intend to take on board the Audit Commission's correct analysis—that, at the very minimum, £800 million of spending that could have been engaged in next year is to be withdrawn from the British public because of the need to retain the poll tax instead of adopting our alternative?

Mr. Key: I was pleased to receive the Audit Commission's endorsement—*[Laughter.]* Oh, yes. It was incorrectly reported in *The Times* this morning. The hon. Gentleman will discover that Mr. Howard Davies has already written to *The Times* to repudiate that. I shall tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what I will do. I shall give him further details of our plans if he will give us details of the announcement made yesterday to the House by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who said that the Labour party has decided on a new way of distributing grant. That was the first that anyone had heard of it.

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received to change the present arrangements for distributing revenue support grant to local authorities.

Mr. Key: I have received a number of representations about the present method of distributing revenue support grant.

Mr. Cran: When will my hon. Friend be able to respond to the various suggestions made by a delegation that went to see him recently—led by the borough of Beverley but representing the views of about 10 district councils—and in particular the suggestion that there should be a grant system for London on the one hand and for the rest of the country on the other? In so doing, will he accept the thanks of the members of that delegation for the constructive way in which he met and spoke to them?

Mr. Key: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. On 22 May I received an important delegation from Beverley, but also represented were Broadland, Harborough, Holderness, North Kesteven, Rutland, Ryedale, Selby, South Northamptonshire and South Ribble. The very serious representations that they made are being considered by me and my colleagues. They proposed that there should be separate formulae for London and the rest of the country that would produce a relatively small gain for a large number of average and below-average need districts and a fairly substantial loss for the metropolitan districts and a small number of urban shire districts. That is the problem, but we shall look at it very carefully.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that in its representations on the changing of local government finance which the Audit Commission published this morning, the commission—set up in 1983 by this Government—recommends the total abolition of the 20 per cent. payment of poll tax rule? Is he further aware that four of the five people who are currently in prison and at least 13 of the 27 who have been in prison for non-payment of the poll tax have no income, or depend entirely on state benefits? Instead of the platitudes of the past few minutes, when will this Government listen to a body that they set up, abolish the 20 per cent. poll tax rule and stop punishing people for their only crime—that of being poor?

Mr. Key: If I could drag the hon. Gentleman into the 20th century and, indeed, into this year, I would point out to him that we have listened. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made a number of announcements this year about proposals to introduce a council tax to replace the community charge. The point about the community charge relief systems that are in operation is that they are designed to help precisely those people of whom the hon. Gentleman pretends to be a champion. One point that he should continually stress is the need for everyone to pay their community charge so that we do not have this scandal of the honest majority continuing to pay for those who will not pay.

People Sleeping Rough

11. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of his initiative for dealing with people sleeping rough in London.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): The initiative has made an encouraging start. My Department has made £96 million available over three years for permanent housing, direct access hostels and support for rough sleepers. So far, some 1,000 places have been provided in a mix of houses, flats and hostels and these are already occupied by people who would otherwise be sleeping out. This number should double within the next six months and reach a total of over 3,000 by the end of next year.

The initiative has begun to have a significant effect on the numbers sleeping rough in central London and I hope that progress will continue as more accommodation becomes available.

I pay tribute to the voluntary groups, the housing associations and the London boroughs for the part that they have played in ensuring the successful start of the initiative in central London.

Mr. Hughes: Is my hon. Friend aware that people working in that sector recognise the enormous progress that has been made since he became the Minister responsible for housing? Is he further aware that, as he suggested, as a result of the initiatives, substantial inroads have been made into the number of people sleeping rough in London?

Does my hon. Friend share my view that the much smaller number of people now sleeping rough on the streets of London have multiple problems and are a hard core of people for whom accommodation will not necessarily provide the whole answer and who may therefore remain on the streets? Can he make progress in collaboration with other Departments to make available to such people the complicated care and help that they need?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. The resources were put in place by a far-sighted predecessor. My hon. Friend is right that the numbers are down. The people whom it has been easiest to help are those most ready to abandon rough sleeping. The more progress one makes the more one reaches a different client group, for which rough sleeping is more of a culture. That group needs more help and support if it is to be persuaded to abandon that culture.

In response to my hon. Friend's final question, I am happy to say that the Department of Health now plays a significant part in the initiative. It is providing hostels with high care, which can cope with some of the people who are mentally ill or have drink or drug problems. The first of those hostels was opened in April. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health

announced a further £2·7 million of revenue funding over three years, to provide further psychiatric support for people who sleep rough.

Mr. Winnick: Is not it an appalling commentary on Government policies that, just a few yards from here, so many people are still sleeping out in alleyways and stations? It is almost impossible not to find such people on one's way home in the evening. Does not the Minister realise that, whatever provisions the Government are making, at long last, what is really required—and not in London alone—is that local authorities should once again be able to build accommodation? There are many people who may not necessarily be sleeping rough, but whom—this includes many of our constituents—are desperate for accommodation. Their problems will be resolved only when council house building begins again.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman gives no credit to the many voluntary organisations that have worked hard over the past six months to make a real impact on the problem and reduce the numbers. The initiative relates not only to hostel spaces. For every hostel space there are two spaces in permanent move-on accommodation. This is not a short-term temporary solution but a long-term solution for people who have been sleeping rough for many years.

County Structure Plans

12. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met Serplan—the South-East Regional Planning Committee—to discuss county structure plans; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment met the chairman of Serplan on 1 August last year and I met the chairman on 14 February this year. On both occasions the discussion covered a range of topics, which included county structure plans. In addition, both my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State and I addressed a Serplan conference on 6 March this year.

Mr. MacKay: Has my hon. Friend seen the press release from Serplan, which says that the committee questions the demand forecast for aggregates and suggests that his Department's estimates are considerably exaggerated? If so, will he confirm to the House that Berkshire county council's draft mineral plan—it will considerably affect my constituency as there would be huge mineral developments in Crowthorne woods, which would be quite unacceptable to local people—can and should be thrown out? Will my hon. Friend confirm that there is no need to treat the Department's suggestions as absolute guidelines and that they will not affect future appeals?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right that the two matters should be regarded separately and that the first should not have a bearing on the second. I make it clear, however, that the forecasts of 7 May are not Government forecasts but independent forecasts put out for consultation and that the Government have emphasised that they would like to hear the views of the House and of local authorities about whether those forecasts are correct. We are also concerned about their potential environmental implications and are urgently considering other ways of getting the aggregates that the country needs.

Mr. Bellotti: What will happen to the county structure plans when the counties are abolished? Is not this the time for the Government to consider that matter and—bearing in mind the very valuable role of Serplan—to look towards a regional tier of government so that these valuable matters can be properly addressed?

Sir George Young: The Government have no plans at all to introduce another tier of regional government. On the hon. Gentleman's first question, any reorganisation is some years away. In the meantime, it is important to put the existing structure and local plans in place. If there is a need to adjust the planning machinery in the future, that will be the time to introduce legislation.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: When my hon. Friend met representatives of Serplan to discuss structure plans, did he give them any indication that his Department was reconsidering its policy of requiring district authorities to earmark a five-year supply of building land? Does my hon. Friend agree that, if that policy is continued, it will inevitably mean overdevelopment in home counties such as Berkshire?

Sir George Young: I am well aware of the strong feeling of many Berkshire Members about the regional guidance housing figures. I emphasise that they are guidance figures. They are not inflexible and they remain to be tested in the process of the structure plan reviews. I think that I am right in saying that Berkshire is in the process of reviewing its structure plan. No doubt when we receive its revised plan later this year we shall have an opportunity to look at it—in particular in the light of fresh figures from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys which are due out shortly.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

13. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many school-age children are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally, but it is estimated that about 65 per cent. of households accepted as homeless last year and found other permanent or temporary accommodation contained dependent children. The Government's homelessness initiative is intended to help local authorities in London and the south-east to secure more permanent housing as an alternative to using bed-and-breakfast and other temporary accommodation for homeless families.

Miss Lestor: If the Minister is saying that the Government do not collect the statistics nationally, it is about time that they did. Research undertaken by Kim Greener at Brunel university has shown that 140,000 school-age children are now in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Is the Minister aware that those children suffer nutritionally because there are no proper cooking facilities in the accommodation and that that affects their educational attainment, because a hungry or malnourished child cannot learn properly? It is about time that the Government reversed their housing policy, because the selling of council houses has meant that all the council houses that could house large families have gone.

Many of the families concerned have been in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for 18 months and their children are suffering to a degree that should not be permitted.

Mr. Yeo: I am astonished at the hon. Lady's question. Our figures show that there are about 11,000 or 12,000 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Unless each family has 12 children, the figure of 140,000 clearly bears no relation to reality. I was also interested to hear the hon. Lady say that the Labour party would abandon the policy of selling council houses.

We have never suggested that bed-and-breakfast accommodation was a satisfactory form of housing, even on a temporary basis. I am glad to say that the figures show that the sharp increase in the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation some years ago has now come to an end and that today the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accomodation represents only a tiny fraction of the number of empty properties held by local authorities. The vast majority of such authorities are under Labour control and the price of the disastrous and incompetent management of the housing stock by Labour-controlled local authorities is paid every day by homeless families and their children.

Mr. Leighton: Why are there so many thousands of children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation when there is so much underused accommodation available? Was not the market supposed to bring supply and demand into balance? As the Secretary of State is so well supplied in this respect and has several large houses, should not the Minister speak to the right hon. Gentleman and invite him to make a personal contribution to the solution of this grave problem?

Mr. Yeo: That was yet another questioner who shows the Labour party's deep underlying hostility to home ownership. Not only could every homeless family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation be accommodated in a tiny fraction of the empty local authority properties, but every single family in the country currently in temporary housing could be accommodated as well, and there would still be 40,000 properties left over.

Councillors

14. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the statutory provisions covering the terms under which an employee of one local authority may serve as a councillor on another; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Sections 1 to 3 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 set out the circumstances in which an employee of one local authority is disqualified from being a councillor in another, thus reinforcing the long-standing convention about the political impartiality of senior local government staff.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he comment on a situation that has arisen in my constituency where the chairman of Thurrock Labour party, which is the ruling party on Thurrock council, also works as the NALGO convener on the council at a salary package of £25,000? He has just negotiated a car leasing deal for senior officers which will cost ratepayers £500,000 a year, at a time when the council has sent notices to people in the rural area saying that it does not have the money to clear sewage. If there is not a bad smell behind that, I should like to know where there is one.

Mr. Key: The important question is not what the officer is paid, but what are his duties. If they involve regularly advising councillors on speaking to the media, the political restrictions must apply. If that is not included in his duties he is entitled to stand for another council. If my hon. Friend has reason to think that an officer whose duties regularly include these politically sensitive matters has not been subjected to the restrictions, she should draw the case to the attention of the independent adjudicator who has power, if the statutory conditions are met, to direct that the officer's post be added to the list of those that are politically restricted.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend consider extending the statutory provisions to candidates? In my constituency the Labour candidate, who works for Leicester county council, appears to be electioneering on about four days out of five. That is a total scandal at the ratepayers' expense.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend, with his excellent record of representing his constituents, should have nothing to fear from such a candidate.

Mr. Skinner: Have not the Tories a cheek to talk about two jobs when 250 Tory Members have moonlighting jobs? Some of them have as many as six, but after the next election Tebbit will be running an agency for all the defeated Tory Members because they will be out of jobs here. The Minister should direct his attention to the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) who, when elected to the House, was an officer of an authority and he kept both jobs.

Mr. Key: I understood that the hon. Gentleman was a professional mushroom picker.

Leasehold Property

15. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to reform the law relating to leasehold property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The commonhold proposals will have implications for the law in respect of leasehold flats, but we have no present plans for changes in respect of leasehold houses.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my hon. Friend aware that some of my constituents face appalling treatment from a company called Munny Ltd. in the Prestwich part of my constituency? They recently formed themselves into a residents' association, but the law needs to be strengthened. We need to move forward urgently on the commonhold front and I ask my hon. Friend to consider including it in the Queen's Speech later this year.

Mr. Yeo: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern and join him in condemning the antics of certain bad freeholders in his constituency. My hon. Friend's constituents are extremely fortunate to have such a vigorous champion of their interests in the House. The ultimate protection in such cases is to be found in the right of all leaseholders of houses to purchase their freehold,

subject, of course, to the value of the property. Through the Landlord and Tenant Act 1988 we have greatly strengthened the rights of leaseholders in houses.

Mr. Flynn: I draw the Minister's attention to the case of some of my constituents, whose leasehold was sold by one company for £800 and then offered by another for £3,500, three months later. They had no help from the law. Is not it time that leasehold, which has been the scourge of south Wales housing for 150 years, was done away with, because it serves no useful purpose, except to allow speculators to make money out of people's homes?

Mr. Yeo: As I said, the ultimate sanction lies in the right of leaseholders to purchase the freeholds of their houses if they fall within the right limits. Nothing in law prevents the freeholder from selling the freehold to another purchaser if he so wishes. That right is exercised by a large number of people under satisfactory circumstances and we have no plans to change the law.

Local Government Review

16. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has had from the south-west on his consultation on the proposed future structure and functions of local government.

Mr. Heseltine: We have so far received eight responses from the south-west to the consultative document on local government structure.

Mr. Nicholson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is widespread support for his approach to this matter, which avoids a top down "Whitehall knows best" approach? Is he also aware that all parties in Taunton Deane, my local authority, want that authority to preserve its natural identity and do not want it extended to either Minehead or Bridgwater? Is he further aware that there may be a role for a slimmed-down county council covering planning, education and social services but that, above all, we do not want regional government?

Mr. Heseltine: I can help my hon. Friend. We are under no illusions about the reluctance to adopt regional government, and we have no plans so to do. I hear clearly his views about his specific interest on the local structure of his authority. Doubtless, these matters will be put with equal eloquence to the local government commission when we set it up.

Greater London Council

19. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations seeking recreation of the GLC.

Mr. Portillo: I have not received any representations seeking recreation of the GLC.

Mr. Dunn: I speak for the people of Dartford and north-west Kent when I tell the Minister that we are opposed to any move to recreate the GLC and to extend its boundaries to the M25, as is the policy of the Labour party. Is my hon. Friend aware that that would mean the end of Dartford as an independent borough in the county of Kent?

Mr. Portillo: The extraordinary thing is that even the Labour party is so embarrassed about the record of the GLC that it has to say that it will not recreate it. We know that if a Labour Government were elected, they would try to recreate something similar, but with greater powers and more bureaucracy. They would like to give it powers over the police. I cannot imagine anything worse than the body that indulged in undermining the police being given such powers.

Councillors' Allowances

22. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the review of local authorities' members' allowances will be included in the Government's review of local government; and if he will make a statement.

23. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to carry out consultations with local authority organisations on the councillors' allowances scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department has worked closely with the local authority associations in drawing up the new system of members' allowances which took effect from 1 April this year. The new system will be reviewed after a year's operation in consultation with the associations.

Mr. Battle: Is it the Government's intention to introduce allowances and full payments for councillors in line with the Secretary of State's proposals for new city-paid mayors? Is that the Government's policy, or do we have to wait for review after review?

Mr. Key: The consultation paper on internal management will be published when we have given due consideration to the issue and the role of councillors will be examined in that context.

Mr. James Lamond: Does the Minister realise that the dithering and delay that have been such features of this Government have extended even to the latest proposals for the compensation that is paid to councillors for attending council meetings? The present system, only recently introduced, is still unsatisfactory. There are many hundreds of councillors throughout the country who are giving their time—in many instances at their own expense—yet are being subjected to scorn and abuse, much of it being poured on them by Conservative Members and Ministers. Does the Minister recognise the work that councillors do for this country?

Mr. Key: I have no hesitation in praising councillors for the work that they do. The best councillors work extremely hard in the interests of their constituents. The regulations, which we discussed in Committee some while ago, were agreed by hon. Members of all parties without a Division. I am sure that the regulations represent the best way forward.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 28 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Ron Leighton
Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo
Mr. John D. Taylor

Points of Order

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that it is the right of all Back-Bench Members to express their point of view in the Chamber or outside it, and that any attempt to stop Members doing that would be serious? It should be noted that there seems to be an attempt to stop one Member of this place from expressing a viewpoint. I refer to persistent reports—no doubt you have seen them, Mr. Speaker—that attempts are being made to muzzle the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). Yesterday, the Prime Minister said in answer to a question that all Members of this place have a right to express a point of view, yet there are persistent reports in various newspapers, including the *Evening Standard*, that attempts are being made——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with points of order one at a time. I can only subscribe to what the Prime Minister said yesterday. In any case, what is said outside the Chamber is not a matter for me.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Rather than that bogus point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a genuine point of order. I am concerned about the membership of Select Committees. I understand that hon. Members are allocated to the Committees according to the strength of the parties represented in the House. It is rumoured, on strong authority, that the hon. Members for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields), for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) and for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) are threatened with expulsion from the Labour party if they support the Militant candidate in the Liverpool, Walton by-election. If that threat were to be carried out——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is an equally bogus point of order. I cannot deal with rumours.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this a genuine point of order?

Mr. Hughes: Yes, Mr. Speaker. You are, of course, the guardian of the reputation, in one sense, of hon. Members when they are in the Chamber. I have been grateful to you for protecting my reputation against that of another hon. Member who shares my name, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). It is said, Mr. Speaker, that there are candidates in the Liverpool, Walton by-election who claim that they represent the real Labour party and the genuine Labour party. If one of the two candidates happens to be elected, how should he describe himself in the record? How will we ensure that we know which bunch of thugs is represented as against the other bunch of thugs?

Mr. Speaker: I am surprised that the hon. Member cannot do better than that. I understand that there are also candidates in elections that call themselves loonie-this and loonie-that. I think that we had better get on.

WELSH AFFAIRS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 98 (Welsh Grand Committee),

Question agreed to.

That the Matter of the Welsh economy, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Welfare of Calves (Export)

3.34 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the export of calves where, after such export, they are to be kept in conditions which would be unlawful in Great Britain—

notably, in veal crates. The Bill clears up an anomaly that has arisen since the Welfare of Calves Regulations came into force on 1 January last year. Of all the cruelties devised for the rearing of farm animals, the veal crates system is one of the most repugnant.

Infant calves are removed from their mother at the age of one or two days—a process that involves extreme distress to both—and within about a week they are sent to market. There then follows a gruelling journey to ports such as Harwich or Dover, a sea journey to the European mainland, and a further road journey. Some calves come from as far away as Scotland or Wales and some will not survive the journey. Those who do not are lucky.

Once the calves arrive at their destination, a terrible fate awaits them. They are put into a veal crate, a solid wooden box just big enough for the young animal to stand or lie down but not to turn around. As the calf grows larger it will not even be allowed to lie down in the normal, stretched-out position. It will remain in the crate for the rest of its short, miserable life of about 26 weeks. Throughout that time, it either stands or lies on the slatted wooden floor. It is given no straw or other bedding material because, were it to eat the straw its flesh might turn into a healthy red whereas European consumers want their veal to be pale pink—to such an extent that it is referred to as "white veal".

To achieve that, the calf is denied not only the roughage and fibre that it craves but is fed throughout its life on an all-liquid diet of milk powder mixed with water. The iron content is kept deliberately low in a further attempt to keep the flesh pale. Many calves are reckoned to be anaemic by the time they are slaughtered. In a desperate attempt to eat fibre, the poor animal licks at its wooden crate and its own hair. The post-mortem examination of a veal calf's stomach often reveals balls of hair, which is evidence of the animal's futile attempts to feed itself with the fibre denied by its human owners.

Anyone who has ever seen calves playing in a field will know how beautifully they play together. These unfortunate animals glimpse other calves only at feeding time—once or twice a day when the front of their crates are opened to allow them to drink their miserable rations from a bucket. As they grow up in their crates, those deprived creatures are subject to infectious diseases of the respiratory and digestive systems. To control the infections they are often given repeated doses of antibiotics. As the calves grow larger, the calf shed often gets hotter and they frequently experience heat stress.

As long ago as 1981, the Select Committee on Agriculture described that system of rearing calves as "abhorrent". But it was not until the introduction of the Welfare of Calves Regulations in 1987 that veal crates were finally banned in this country. Even that ban did not come into force until 1 January last year. Although veal crates are banned in Britain, British farmers currently export about 1,000 calves a day to be reared in Europe in the very system we have outlawed here. Moreover, much of the meat—some 40 per cent.—is re-imported to this country. Last year, we exported 345,700 calves, mostly to the Netherlands and France, where the veal crate is in widespread use.

Under the Bill, that trade will be illegal. Some people will say that we have no choice because the treaty of Rome obliges us to submit those animals to lifelong degradation. I disagree; article 36 of the treaty enables a member state to impose restrictions on exports or imports where those can be justified on grounds of public morality or public policy, or on grounds of the protection of health and life of animals or humans.

If ever there was a case for taking a stand on grounds of morality, this is it. I look forward to the day when British Ministers go to Brussels, as they are about to do in the case of sow stalls, and take the initiative in persuading the EC to outlaw veal crates throughout the EC. I am confident that a Labour Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would do that.

Unlike you, Mr. Speaker, I am not a vegetarian, but the more that I find out about the way in which our farm animals are treated, the less meat I can bring myself to eat. I know that many people of all political persuasions take the same view. There is a growing revulsion in Britain against the way in which farmers and meat manufacturers rear meat. Farmers and meat manufacturers ignore that revulsion at their peril.

The Bill is only one of a number of recent measures designed to restore some morality to the meat industry. It has the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Chris Mullin, Dame Janet Fookes, Mr. Bob Clay, Sir Richard Body, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Bowen Wells, Mr. Robin Corbett, Mr. Matthew Taylor, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Ron Davies and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

WELFARE OF CALVES (EXPORT)

Mr. Chris Mullin accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the export of calves where, after such export, they are to be kept in conditions which would be unlawful in Great Britain: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 July and to be printed. [Bill 181.]

Points of Order

3.41 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not customary for a representative of the Department for which ten-minute Bills are being proposed to be present throughout its hearing? I can recall this question being raised before when a previous Speaker recommended that a Minister representing the Department concerned should be here—of course, the Government cannot be forced—as a matter of courtesy, interest and potential support. I regret to note that a Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has not been present for an important Bill which is supported by me and many of my hon. Friends and Conservative Members.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is unfortunate that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and his junior Minister have been prevented from attending by other important duties. However, I am Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I shall ensure that he receives a full report on the Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a completely different point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would be useful to have it on record that the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) when question 17 was called earlier and about which Conservative Members made a number of comments, was due to the fact that his wife, Claudia, gave birth to a baby today and he is looking after her.

Mr. Speaker: It was chivalrous of the hon. Gentleman to draw that matter to the attention of the House. I am sure that the House wishes the parents and the baby well.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill

[SECOND DAY]

Considered in Committee. [Progress, 11 June]

[MISS BETTY BOOTHROYD *in the Chair*]

Clause 3

VALUATION OF DOMESTIC PROPERTIES

3.43 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 2, line 34, leave out 'a' and insert 'an individual'.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 27, in page 2, line 48, leave out 'of all the domestic properties' and insert 'comprising the values of each domestic property'.

No. 28, in page 2, line 49, leave out from 'area' to end.

New clause 12—*Valuation*—

'There shall be maintained for each levying authority area in Scotland a valuation list showing the value of each property. This list shall be prepared and from time to time updated in accordance with arrangements to be prescribed.'.

Mr. Blunkett: In moving the amendment it is appropriate for me to ask a number of questions. First, who, in June 1979, referring to the scrapping of the then valuation system, said, "Tear them up"? Who was it who started the shambles which has culminated in the proposed introduction of the council tax? Who, by delaying that valuation, ensured that the rating system became difficult to operate? Who cut the grants to local authorities in the early 1980s who ensured that that happened?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore).

Mr. Blunkett: No, it was not my right hon. Friend who made that remark; it was the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), now the Secretary of State for the Environment. He said "Tear them up" and the tearing-up process resulted in the infliction of the poll tax on the British people because it helped to discredit the rating system and, with the cuts in grant, made it very difficult for councils to operate in the environment in which the Secretary of State for the Environment had placed local authorities. The Bill is therefore the direct result of the first set of actions taken by the present Secretary of State.

It must also be said that Conservative Members, and especially Conservative Back Benchers, are in great danger of being conned. Today decisions will be taken by the House on the nature of the valuation system and on the commitment to a banding process. As the media may not be aware of it any more than are many Back Benchers, it behoves us to state that, once this allegedly small Bill is on the statute book, many of the decisions about what the council tax will entail will have been decided.

What stands between the Back Benchers and a second round of public wrath and acrimony similar to that caused by the poll tax is a statutory instrument or negative order which is unamendable, unchangeable and eminently whippable. In other words, after tonight Conservative Members will have been conned. They will not be able to say that they did not know because this afternoon we are giving them the opportunity to change their minds. They might feel that it is a good idea to start the valuation system now, from the passage of the Bill, because that will give them a breathing space in which to tell people that the system is under way. However, they will not realise that they will get the banding system whether or not they like it, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will outline later. They will be denied a return to the rates and an immediate abolition of the poll tax, which again my hon. Friend will shortly spell out.

Conservative Members will be faced with the delay that the Audit Commission rightly mentioned in its submission today for the consultation exercise that finishes this Friday. It said that the cost—a minimum of £800 million a year—will have to be borne by the British people. We estimate that it will be considerably more than that. That money could be spent on saving essential services. It would clearly prevent any arguments in favour of capping; it would ensure that teachers had the books and equipment to do their job; it would mean that social services throughout the country would have the cash to ensure that home helps could be provided; and it would also ensure the maintenance of leisure facilities, libraries, the environment in general and decent transport, all of which are currently under threat. Such provisions could be continued with that money which, instead, will be used to continue the poll tax.

It is even worse that today's debate is taking place just two days before the consultation period is due to finish. In other words, it is a farce that bodies such as the Audit Commission, the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, local authority associations and many others are submitting their evidence as part of the so-called consultation, which is to be completed by Friday, only to find that the horse has bolted before the stable door has even been opened. That adds insult to injury for all those who took seriously the Secretary of State's words earlier this year when he said that he believed in consultation.

As my hon. Friends will remember, the Secretary of State chided us and said, "Come and see us. Consultation is a serious matter." He had the Liberals come to see him and told them that he would take them seriously. They presented their evidence for an alternative that would have abolished valuation, but what did the Secretary of State do? He added up their figures, and then used them against them. It did not do the Conservatives much good in local elections.

The valuation process starts today, and it must involve an assessment of what sample properties mean. It is no good the Secretary of State saying, "We have a valuation system called banding." We need a system for assessing the actual value of the property. That value will then determine the bands into which similar properties will be placed. We need to know on what basis that will be done. Will it be capital value rating?

The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation has rightly raised clear questions about what the system will entail. It submitted evidence under the consultation process, and the Secretary of State should be made aware of it because time is running out. Proceedings on this Bill will be finished late tonight, so further consultation will be irrelevant. In its evidence, the institute said:

"There is no precedent, as far as the Institute is aware, for the grouping of properties into different tax bands for the purpose of a property tax. It is generally assumed, particularly in a capital value based system, that an exact valuation can be arrived at and defended in relation to other neighbouring values through an appeals system."

That is important to the way in which people will perceive what they are charged, and also to their rights as individuals to challenge the valuation, and therefore the placing of their properties in particular bands. It will materially affect what they will pay, and on the margin that could be quite substantial. It could be 20 per cent. under the proposed banding system.

The institute continued:

"It is hard to imagine that properties can be placed in bands without the valuer going through at least the mental exercise of determining an exact or 'spot' valuation."

The system cannot operate unless there is an exercise such as that referred to by the institute. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham will later spell out the mental exercise carried out earlier this year when the Government invented the banding system. To move forward today, there must be some guess about the valuation system. What will it be?

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The House should be clear that the hon. Gentleman is referring to an entirely English practice. There is a new clause grouped with the amendment that refers to Scotland, although I do not propose to speak to it. I must make it clear that the Scottish Assessors Association has distinctly different views from those being expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Blunkett: We are discussing a clause that relates only to England and Wales, and I had presumed that the House would understand that. Our amendment relates to the valuation system in England. Other amendments will be discussed later that refer specifically to Scotland. We are talking about the way in which we want individual valuations to be undertaken.

The problem is that nobody really knows what the system will be or what the professionals will be expected to do. The general secretary of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Mr. Michael Pattison, is quoted in today's *Evening Standard* as describing the system as likely to be a shambles. He said:

"banding allocations will become unrealistic and unfair. This is the fast route to a discredited tax."

It will be the fast route to the demise of Tory Members. Unless they take seriously what is being said, they will run into exactly the same problems that they experienced with the poll tax. A quick solution with easy answers ended up as one of the most complicated and difficult fiascos in the history of British politics.

The Confederation of British Industry's rating and property manager, Mr. Sharman, who chairs its valuation committee, said:

"From a professional point of view I don't like the banding system, it seems to go against the principles of valuation."

It cannot do anything else, unless this afternoon we hear spelt out what that sampling or mental exercise system will be based on. From today, valuers will be asked to go out and do the job—to sample properties and select beacon properties which show how properties will fit into whatever number of bands we eventually end up with.

[Mr. Blunkett]

We have been asking whether there will be regular revaluations and Ministers have been responding. We understand not. On 24 May, in an interview with the *Municipal Journal*, the Minister of State said:

"Once a property has gone into a band, we think it will stay in that band virtually in perpetuity."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out at the end of the Second Reading debate, one cannot get more determined than "in perpetuity". That means that a property will stay where it is "virtually" for ever. Without constant revaluation and with the Secretary of State's words of June 1979, "Tear them up", ringing in everybody's ears, we shall run into exactly the same problems as we have had in recent years.

People must be told of their rights of appeal. They must be given those rights. Again, I should be grateful for the Minister's clarification. I understand from the conclusion of the Second Reading debate that rights of appeal will exist. Will he confirm that they will exist not simply in Scotland, which was being referred to at the time, but in England and Wales? If rights of appeal do not exist, the British people had better know from today.

People can make a judgment when the surveyor, estate agent or estate agent's agent, son or daughter has been sent round to do a spot check on their street. We have no guarantees of the professionalism of those doing that job. People will demand the right to know, first, what it is that their property is being valued on, and, secondly, whether they have a right to challenge the valuation. Unless there are individual valuations, the right of appeal will inevitably lead to mayhem. People will demand to know on what basis their property is assessed and how they can judge whether it is fair. The difficulty of dealing with appeals will become a nightmare.

There are 23,000 outstanding valuations under the national business rate in west Yorkshire alone. As 1,000 valuations are made a year, they will be just about completed by the year 2015. It is an absolute farce. At least with individual valuations, one stands a chance of making a judgment, but without them, what is being argued about? It must be whether one has the same sort of house in the same street or same neighbourhood and what factors affect its value.

One must be absolutely clear that the valuation must be on sale price, and sale price relates to capital values. That is what was described, when the Scottish Labour party first mooted it, as the roof tax. That is what Tory Members called it. The then chairman of the Conservative party and present Home Secretary described it in glowing terms as "the hammer of capital value rates".

He said that it would

"hit tenants as well as home owners. Instead of people benefiting from an increase in the value of their properties, they would be heavily penalised."

My source for this information is the well known and reliable newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, in its edition of 19 September 1989—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) says that he will buy the paper——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): I merely said that I was back.

4 pm

Mr. Blunkett: The hon. Gentleman always lets me know when he is back. I should like him to buy the newspaper: when it gets off its propaganda, its articles are quite informative and extremely well written. I do not fall into the trap into which the Secretary of State for Education and Science falls. He attacks any newspaper that does not agree with his point of view.

Be that as it may, Ministers appear to have changed their minds and to have decided that capital values—or sale price—are acceptable for the sampling process. After all, the Minister of State, a well-known opponent of property valuation and of a property tax, said as much himself:

"property values are no proxy for wealth or income and any system based on property will repeat the injustice of the domestic rates."—*[Official Report*, 22 May 1990; Vol. 173, c. 186.]

So it is on record that the Conservatives do not believe in property valuation or in capital values—sale price—but they intend to have a system which will in the end result in properties being placed in bands.

Consultation exercise No. 2.21 says that

"straightforward rental and capital values both have substantial disadvantages as a basis for local taxation".

By way of an excuse for that, consultation exercise No. 2.22 states:

"The Government believe that these problems can be overcome by a new approach: by adopting a banded system".

A system of banding merely places properties relative to each other once a valuation has taken place, but the valuation has to take place first before the allocation to a band can happen. That is why we tabled this important amendment, and, in the months to come, many Conservative Members will greatly regret not voting for it.

On the day when the Secretary of State made his announcement in the House, 23 April, I described this as the chip shop factor. Unfortunately, he misunderstood what I meant. He thought that I was having a go at chip shop owners, and he predicted that they would come down in force to put their point of view as part of the consultation process which ends this Friday. I did not mean what he thought. I meant that a person who lives next door to a chip shop and next door to a disco on the other side—*[Interruption.]*

It has been suggested that some hon. Members do not understand what happens in Sheffield. Those who live in large houses worth £800,000 in Westminster and who will pay only £227 under the proposed council tax, and those who live in mansions in Oxfordshire, do not live next door to chip shops—and I am pleased for them. I do not want people to have to live next door to chip shops. It is bad for their cholesterol levels apart from anything else. It is also bad for the price of their house—and not because chip shops are bad or because their owners are malevolent. It is just that they bring down the price of a property, so people in similar property, with a garden of the same size, just down the road expect to pay more than the property next door to the chip shop.

That was the rough and ready justice of the old rating system. The person whose house overlooks the local park at the end of the street, and has a wonderful environment in which to enjoy his garden and the quiet pleasure of his home, is in a completely different position from the person who lives next door to a small workshop where someone drills cars all day. Not to understand that is to

misunderstand the wrath of thousands of people who will be put into the wrong band because the sampling process has placed their houses together with properties of the same type, but with higher sale value.

The system will be damned unfair and everyone knows it. As we shall spell out later, it will be unfair between families and individuals, and between different parts of the country and different parts of the same street. It will be no good expecting to keep it quiet, because people will talk to each other. They will all understand which band their property is in, and the circumstances in which they live.

What method will be used? If the sale price is used, it will be capital values. If not, we need to know what the basis will be. Ministers may spill the beans this afternoon. They may like to withdraw the Bill, even at this late stage, think again and talk to their Back Benchers about how to proceed. It may help Ministers if they do not have to stand on their heads and wave their legs in the air for the second time in 12 months. The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—who is a very able politician—may even be able to hold down his job with some integrity if he does not have to contradict himself so regularly. Who knows, between now and the general election, there may be a change of Prime Minister and a different system may again be introduced. If so, the Minister will probably come back and say the opposite. I hope that he will tell us how he feels about that prospect.

One thing is absolutely clear: the professionals do not think that the council tax is a good idea. The Audit Commission has considerable doubts about it. The public know that the delay that they are incurring is at their expense, and that the mess that we are in is of the Government's making. Perhaps the best way of getting the message across to the public is to ask them a little conundrum: when is a value not a value? When it is the value of someone else's property just down the road. That is what we are faced with. However, it will not happen.

Valuations will be carried out during the summer. Expenditure will be incurred. If the general election is delayed until next spring, £250 million of our money will be spent on this system. Night after night throughout the winter, we will discuss the council tax in the unhealthy environment of the Committee Rooms; no one will be listening and no one will be watching. It will all catch up on the Government in the end, just as the poll tax did. In Committee, people laughed and sneered until 2 am. Some hon. Members joked when the Church of England Synod announced that it was against the poll tax. The poll tax and its aftermath will deal the Government a severe and irrevocable political blow.

The council tax, like the poll tax, is ill thought out and is being introduced far too rapidly. We will replace it by amending whatever is on the statute book to make it fairer, more understandable and more acceptable to the British people.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I must come to the defence of chip shop owners. As a Lancastrian—I lived there for 35 years before I came to London—I mention every night in my prayers an aunt who had a chip shop. She remembered me in her will and I remember her in my prayers. I do not know what occupation she has in the afterlife, but no doubt it will be done as efficiently as her Lancashire chip shop.

I would not necessarily wish to live next to a Lancashire chip shop, or certainly not in London because the gap between us must be very wide. However, there is no doubt that the chip shop is part of the culture of Lancashire. There is no doubt that in the first and second world wars the Lancashire Fusiliers were part of the strength of our country, with a basis of those potato chips, which were mostly grown in Lancashire, and of the ordinary working-class life there.

However, I do not speak in defence of Lancashire now but on behalf of London, which I represent. The banding system is better than individual rating. If one returns to a system in which everyone's house is looked at every year there will be more valuers and bureaucrats than people living in this country—certainly more than the number of chip shops. There will be valuers everywhere. When one puts in central heating the charge will go up, and we do not want to return to that system.

I welcome the Government's original idea of three bands, a band for Scotland—it is not my job to look after Scotland—and a brass band for England. Despite having a wife from Wales I am not very well up on that——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): A pipe band for Scotland.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Yes, we agree. I am glad that I am taking the Committee with me; a pipe band for Scotland, a brass band, from "Bess's in the Barn" or elsewhere, for England and for Wales——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A male voice choir.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am assisted by the Minister, and I am grateful for his shrewd intervention. I agree—a male voice choir for Wales.

However, I must disagree to a certain extent as we need a fourth band. After all, there are four points to the compass and I think that things must be in fours if they are to work properly. One can factorise fours, although one cannot factorise threes. Therefore, if there is going to be a banding system, we need a separate band for London and the south-east, because property prices here are so different from those in the rest of the country.

Presumably the three bands were set up because of the differences between prices in Scotland and Wales, so that the same would be charged for a three-bedroomed semi whether in Scotland with the pipe band, in Wales with the male voice choir or in Lancashire with the brass band. We have to do something like "The Lambeth Walk" for London. We have to do something for London, because prices are so much higher here than elsewhere.

That is important because the amount of Government money coming in will obviously be related to the amount raised locally. My people in Brent, North and people in numerous other seats in London will look at this system and say, "Hang on, we weren't happy about the previous system and we wanted to be fair to the Ribble Valley, but the last thing we want is a reverse Ribble Valley factor whereby we lose out in the south of England."

It is evident from studying the figures that 47 per cent. of houses in Barnet are in the top band of the seven. In my constituency, an overwhelming number are similarly in the top bands. However, only 1 per cent. are in the top band in the north-west of England, so they are not comparable. Presumably, the idea behind the bands was that people in a three-bedroomed semi would pay the same in Wales, Scotland and England and also in London, which is in England.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): If the right hon. Gentleman reads amendment No. 29, which stands in the name of my hon. Friends and myself, he will realise that we are referring to regional banding, which is the very case that he is making now. When he refers to banding, would he not merely consider an appropriate band for the south-east? We should consider the position throughout the country on a regional basis.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I am concerned to get a fair deal for my constituents, and I am sure that that wish is shared by all hon. Members.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The Minister is seeking to intervene; he will solve all our problems.

Mr. Portillo: I am afraid that my right hon. Friend might be in danger of being too fair to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). He will be perfectly aware that the Labour party's policy is not to have regional bands, but to go back to the rating system. Under the rating system, the unfairness of those in more expensive properties paying much more—almost unlimited amounts more—than those living in less valuable properties would be manifest. There would be no improvement on the system that we abolished two years ago. I am sure that my right hon. Friend would not wish the hon. Member for Normanton to get away with his comments.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention. I have no doubt that his oratory will be such in his reply that the Labour party's proposal for a rating system will die some time between his speech and the Division.

4.15 pm

Mr. O'Brien: I appreciate the opportunity to repeat my point. I did not say that amendment No. 29 represents Labour party policy, but that it amends the Bill. It states that there are inequalities among the regions. I want to ensure that the record is correct because I am positive that the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) will support the amendment when we come to it.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member is quite correct. We have not come to that amendment yet, so let us leave it for the moment.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I wait with interest to see whether my views influence the Minister's reply. I believe in the salvation of all men and the salvation of souls on the way. If that means that there may be two or three other bands elsewhere in the country that will satisfy people and lead to dancing in the streets this evening, I would not say no to that.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman thinking of Rawtenstall?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Rawtenstall is near where I was born. It is nice of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to guess the place of my birth from my accent.

I have obtained figures from the London Boroughs Association, which is by no means a Labour but a Conservative organisation, on the seven bands in the three areas. Of the 33 Greater London boroughs, 18 will be worse off—most of them are Conservative-controlled—than under the community charge system. The residents will not like that, which is putting it gently. Most people look to a new system to make them at least the same, if not better off than before.

The last thing I want—I have already referred to it—is a reverse Ribble Valley factor. To an extent, the system was changed because of what happened at the Ribble Valley by-election. I do not want the policy to go the other way because we would then have to r edeem the situation again by introducing an alternative policy.

The people of London and the south-east have as much concern for paying their bills as people elsewhere. I do not think that one part of our society is any better or worse than another. They are the same. Because of the high price of mortgages in London, people are already paying a high price for living there. Most of them were born in that city and they want to continue to live there. They know that city and it is where their friends are. In contrast to the previous recession, this one is hitting the London area and people in London are seriously concerned. The proposal for a band to cover London to ensure that we are not depleted financially or treated unfairly is, to my mind, an important one for my constituents and those in the rest of London.

The London Boroughs Association was right to work out an alternative system so that a three-bedroomed house in London should be charged the same, as far as possible, as those elsewhere in the country. That is how the decision should be made.

Mr. Douglas: Much as I love and adore the right hon. Gentleman and his speeches, will he clarify how it would be possible to treat three-bedroomed houses the same throughout the country if capital valuation is based on arm's-length deals? Presumably the right hon. Gentleman believes in the free market—I know he does—so how can one use arm's-length deals to arrive at the capital value?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I recognise the force of that intervention, but this is a fallen world, even in Scotland. There is no perfect system. All that we can achieve is a reasonable system. The hon. Gentleman will see that I am in one of my most reasonable moods. We should move nearer the kindgom of heaven if we had four bands instead of three. We should hear the hallelujah chorus not only in Rawtenstall but in London if the Minister were to announce that there is to be a fourth band.

I should have preferred the community charge to remain in place, but that is now history. My concern is that the new system will sadly disadvantage one area of the country, in just the same way as the community charge led to low-rated properties in the north being disadvantaged. Unless there is a fourth band for London, it will become a disadvantaged area. We are not prepared to accept that. Unless banding is fair, the people of London will wreak their vengeance in the ballot boxes.

The amendment relates to banding and that is what we are really discussing. I have the greatest respect for the Minister, but I must tell him that between now and the introduction of banding he should provide at least four bands. If not, there will be a Ribble Valley backlash in the south of England if it finds that it is put at a disadvantage compared with the north. A fourth band would ensure that

chip shops in London did not have to pay more than chip shops in the north. People in the south would then be able to pay the same for their chips as people in the north.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) has made an interesting case for another bank for both chip shops and Brent, North. The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) would provide for the valuation of each domestic property, chip shops or otherwise. Ultimately, the bands that apply to each individual householder must be seen to be fair, otherwise people will compare what they have to pay with what is paid by other people in the neighbourhood. If they do not like the comparison, they will be very dissatisfied.

We have put forward various proposals since 1980. At that time I saw the then Secretary of State for the Environment, who is now back in that job, and put to him proposals for a local form of income tax, based on ability to pay. It is not a regressive form of taxation. It is fair and is based on individual banding. One day, the House will have to return to that question.

Amendments Nos. 27 and 28 deal specifically with the compiling of a register of the values of all domestic property. If they accept the amendment the Government would be able to take action about empty housing. When revaluation takes place they would have the opportunity, in line with Shelter's proposals, to draw up a national register of empty properties. The Government argue against requiring every local authority in the country to draw up a list of all empty properties in the area. They say that it would be a cumbersome, bureaucratic and costly exercise.

With 700,000 vacant properties, an exercise along those lines is long overdue, but the Government have set their face against it and say that they do not have the resources and that they do not wish to impose that responsibility on local government. The amendments and new clause would give us the chance, as we carry out a detailed valuation and at no extra cost, to establish the number and location of empty properties in the country today. I notified the Minister's office earlier today that I intended to raise this issue.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Many people regard local authorities as the worst offenders in keeping properties empty for unnecessarily long periods. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be a helpful start in establishing the register that he suggests if local authority figures were published, as the information is immediately available to all local authorities?

Mr. Alton: That is a seductive argument, but unfortunately the facts do not bear out the hon. Gentleman's view. In my own city, for example, 5,289 properties owned by the local authority—8·8 per cent. of the housing stock—are vacant. That is scandalous when many people are without a home, but 6 per cent. of private properties in Liverpool—7,064—are vacant too, as are 931—4 per cent.—of those owned by housing associations.

The situation is indeed horrifying. It is true that local authorities have empty properties—92,000 in all throughout the United Kingdom—which represent 2·5 per cent. of the entire housing stock. Housing associations have 19,700—3·5 per cent. of total housing stock. In the other part of the public sector—the Government's own properties—some 31,000 properties are empty. But in the private sector there are a staggering 586,000 empty properties. That comes to a total of more than 700,000.

There is a clear case for drawing up a register of such properties when the valuation is undertaken. Local authorities would then not have to make it a separate exercise, and we could see the scale of the problem and start to match that major asset of more than 700,000 empty properties with the 2 million people that Shelter estimates are in need of housing.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I follow the logic of the argument about registering empty properties, but does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is also necessary to outline why the properties are empty? Would it not be a cruel deception to tell the homeless, as Conservative Members often do, that properties are standing empty waiting for someone to move in? We know that the majority of empty properties, especially those in local authority hands, are empty for good reasons. They are being refurbished or repaired, or perhaps waiting to be re-let. There are reasons why property stands empty, and it is not always available for people simply to move into.

Mr. Alton: That is true, but one answer could be provided by the sweat equity schemes, whereby people put their own efforts and resources into renovating and doing up property currently out of the market. I would like all property which has lain empty for six months, whether it be in the public or private sector, to be submitted to the district valuer for a valuation, placed on the market and made available for families.

I agree that properties are often vacant because resources have not been made available to do them up. Rather than wait for ever for the necessary resources, it would be a better recognition of reality simply to make the properties available for families to get on with the job of improving them.

The situation is pretty grim in a number of cities. In Newcastle, as the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) will know, there are 6,790 empty properties; in Sheffield there are 8,810, in Birmingham 10,900 and in Manchester 10,760.

Mr. Blunkett: I advise the hon. Gentleman to use such statistics cautiously. Statistics are often produced using figures incorporating houses under improvement, houses that have just been demolished and houses that are being held for other purposes. In Sheffield, for example, properties are being held for the world student games.

Mr. Alton: I know that, and it is fair enough to put it on the record, but I know of properties in my own constituency which have now been earmarked by the local authority for demolition when during the previous two years they have been massively improved, at great expense.

In March, Liverpool city council admitted that its outstanding debt on property demolished in the previous year was £1,255,000, and that was purely on the repayment of loan charges. For a city whose current debt is a staggering £800 million, that is a crazy way to proceed.

4.30 pm

We should not spend all our time simply attacking local authorities or the private sector. I recently wrote to a private landlord in Birmingham and in his reply he admitted that he did not know that he owned a property that had been vacant for some years. Having had this

pointed out to him, he has now agreed to take out a restoration and improvement grant for the property. We should not entirely blame the Government either, although, as I have said, there are more than 30,000 Government-owned empty properties.

A general valuation will enable us to prepare a public register that will cost nothing because it will be done as part of the valuation already taking place. I hope that the Government will seriously consider my plea to carry out such a survey and to publish the figures.

Empty houses not only represent a loss of a resource, but are often tinder boxes and a breeding ground for vermin. Like a cancer, decay spreads throughout a terrace or a neighbourhood. Hon. Members are well aware of the curse that an empty property can become. Many families would like to make use of such properties and could turn them into homes.

As part of the same valuation there should be an assessment of properties, such as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Brightside, which are listed as likely to be demolished. In the Bull Ring in St. Andrew's gardens in my constituency, several hundred properties are empty, and many of them would make prefectly good homes. I do not accept the logic of demolition for such properties. Close to that tenement is a similar one which used to be called Myrtle gardens but is now known as Minster court. It was taken over and improved by a private company, Barratts, and every flat was sold. There are creative ways to proceed, and we should not resort to demolition.

There are other ways in which the register could be positively used. For instance, when arriving at valuations for individual householders, we should bear in mind the services that they receive. That is another reason for supporting the amendment. When I look at the museum of horrifying examples, in my city and at the failure to provide services, I can think of good reasons for people to receive substantial rebates and a reduced assessment.

For 13 weeks, some of my constituents have not had their bins emptied. Those areas are festering and piled high with rubbish. I wrote to a junior Minister, who suggested that I should contact the Keep Britain Tidy group asking it to run a local campaign. Many parts of Liverpool are now a public health hazard. There are rats as big as cats; a stench from noxious refuse; and even children's playgrounds piled high with rubbish. I am sure that the Minister will agree that people are entitled to better than that.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 contains powers enabling the Government to bring contractors into areas in which people are not receiving services. If Horse Guards parade, the streets around Buckingham palace or even Marsham street itself were piled high with refuse, those powers would undoubtedly be used to remove it. Ministers should think seriously about intervening and not leave community charge payers to stew in their own juice.

The valuation should take account of demography and social structure. Whole communities should not be penalised because of the attitudes of a minority. I hope that this time next year my constituents will not be sent bills for £70·99 in lieu of charges that should have been levied against people who did not pay last year. That is contrary to every principle of natural justice. People who paid their full bill last year should not have to find almost £71 this year to pay for other people's services. If the local gas board arrived at my home and asked me to pay for gas that I had not consumed and threatened to cut me off if I did not pay, I would feel extremely aggrieved.

Labour's non-payment campaign has led to a great deal of hardship for many ordinary honest people in the city of Liverpool. They have been caught up like world war one soldiers in the trenches, while the generals fire across their heads. No doubt this is also true of many other cities. That is why I am anxious that, before we proceed any further with the Bill, the Minister gives us a categorical undertaking that there will be a right of redress for citizens. In future, residents should not be forced to pay double bills to make up for those who refused to pay in the previous year. That includes Members of Parliament, who have not paid but are perfectly able to meet their bills. I am not talking about people who are unable to pay but about those who, for political reasons, refused to pay and who have left a legacy of accumulated debts that have to be made good by those who have paid.

A valuation that does not take those factors into account will be as worthless as the unfair system that it will replace. The amendment now before the Committee would require information on the estimated value of each property. The unamended clause would only give us a list of all properties, with minimal details of the band in which they appear. That would not be enough information. The rating system advocated by the hon. Member for Brightside is not one that I would advocate, but his amendment comes closer to what I should like to see happen than would the unamended clause. Therefore, I commend it to the Committee.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) I speak primarily with London in mind. He has quite rightly drawn the attention of the Committee to the wide disparities that may occur if one simple valuation is conducted across the whole of England, particularly when Scotland and Wales are to be treated differently. I speak for my right hon. Friend as well in paying tribute to the London Boroughs Association for the hard work that it has done in pointing out the many questions that need to be answered by my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues in the Department of the Environment before this goes ahead. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give the House a number of detailed answers.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has already covered a lot of ground in a tour d'horizon. He quoted a number of the briefs that he has been sent not only by local government associations but by the likes of the Confederation of British Industry. Clearly, valuation and how it is to be conducted are at the core of the policy for local government finance that the Government are proposing.

When this alternative to the community charge was suggested by the Government, I felt that a valuation that would work, and would even out many of the regional differentials, would be one based on rebuild costs. One of the big problems in London, which causes disparity in values, is high land value. The properties do not cost that much more to build or rebuild. We all know that insurance companies are happy that valuation for properties is done by the occupiers. We are sent a chart of costs carefully worked out by expert surveyors and valuers from which we calculate, according to the number of rooms, or the size of

the rooms, how much it would cost to rebuild our homes. Last time that I renewed my house insurance, my insurance company asked me to employ that method.

If we followed that form of valuation, it would be possible for the public to be much involved in the process. They would feel, given the questions that they were asked, that they were producing a fair valuation. If necessary, the valuers appointed by the commissioners would be able to check specific valuations to ascertain whether people were giving incorrect information. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities will be able to hint whether that is an avenue down which we might be going.

I ask my hon. Friend to tell the Committee what the thinking is within the Department of the Environment about the current prospect of regional disparities. The London Boroughs Association has produced charts—I know that copies have been sent to the Department in the consultation process—that show that in greater London 0·9 per cent. of properties would be in band A, whereas 15·7 per cent. would be in Band G. There is no especially good and acceptable distribution across the bands. As has been said by the association and reported to the Committee by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, in the north 46·6 per cent. of properties would be in band A and only 1·8 per cent. in band G. The most stark example of the extraordinary banding in London is provided by the borough of Barnet, where 47 per cent. of houses would fall into band G. That cannot be acceptable to London Members for various reasons which I shall spell out.

The only region where there is an acceptable spread across the bands which does not change under the calculations made by the LBA is the south-west. In band A there would be 8·9 per cent. of properties. There would be 16·1 per cent. in band B, 24·4 per cent. in band C, 20·8 per cent. in band D, 15·2 per cent. in band E, 7·9 per cent. in band F and 6·7 per cent. in band G. The south-west is the LBA's model because in its new plan for regional banding the percentages remain the same.

The result of the LBA's new plan is that 6·8 per cent. of properties in greater London would be in band A. There would be a spread of properties across the bands, with 7·8 per cent. coming into band G. With regional banding, it is possible to come close to having 7 per cent. of properties in band G and 7 to 8 per cent. in band F without the enormous disparity that currently occurs when we come to band A.

It is important to those of us who represent London constituencies and who speak for the London boroughs to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to tell us at least that the Government are not ruling out the possibility of regional banding. There should not be only one English band. There should not be a London band and then a band for the rest, as I think my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North was suggesting. There is an argument for perhaps five or six bands for the English regions.

The amount of Government grant that local authorities will receive under the new finance system that is introduced by the council tax will depend on the moneys that they are able to raise locally. In areas such as London, where house prices are high, more money will be raised through the new tax under the suggested banding system, and I assume that the boroughs will receive less in grant. As a result, London taxpayers will be subsidising the services that are enjoyed by their counterparts further north.

4.45 pm

The LBA's argument should be accepted by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The borough within his constituency is one of the sensible Labour-controlled authorities. Barking and Dagenham are still fully participating members of the LBA, as are the boroughs that are controlled by the Liberal Democrats in London.

The suggestions that have been made by the LBA during the consultation process should be taken seriously by the Government, who should respond to them. I look forward to my hon. Friend the Minister shedding more light on the direction in which the Government will be heading to correct what are clearly possible disparities.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities will be visiting Southampton on Friday and I wish to suggest one or two points that could be made when, I hope, he radiates to the public. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) talked about the extra charges that are the result of non-payment of the community charge. In Southampton, that charge is £50·95 per person. Part of that sum reflects the interest charges on the moneys that had to be borrowed to enable the authority to make its budget. My hon. Friend can make great play of that.

It is clear that amendment No. 27 is a wrecking amendment. If every individual house and outbuilding and every individual piece of land has to be valued, the task will not be completed before it is necessary to start again. Simplicity will be the answer. I even think that a seven-band system will have one band too many. In a city such as Southampton there could be duplication of styles, so that entire council estates could be valued simply by obtaining plans from the local authority and making a valuation on that basis instead of setting out with tape and measure. If valuations are not carried out on that basis, we shall be faced with overwhelming costs and we shall not be ready for 1993.

Mr. Portillo: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), I am astonished when he tells me that the Southampton local authority has had to levy a £50 non-collection charge. I understood that that authority liked to posture as a model of modern Labour Kinnockite government. For that local authority to be so inefficient and inept at collecting the community charge says much about its administration.

If I were a citizen of Southampton I should be angry at having to pay £50 to compensate for the fact that other people had not paid, which must be largely attributable to the failure of the city council.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Does the Minister of State recall the Prime Minister describing the poll tax as uncollectable? Is not the fault implicit in the poll tax and nothing to do with efficient, hard-working local authorities struggling with an unworkable system?

Mr. Portillo: No, it is not implicit in the community charge. The collection figures for last year have already reached 86 per cent. and will rise further. Some local authorities, including inner-city and even Labour-controlled authorities, have managed to make a fair fist of collecting the community charge, while others, including Southampton, have failed dismally to collect it.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): My hon. Friend the Minister of State was recently in the

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

city of Nottingham. To illustrate the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), may I point out that the city of Nottingham is charging every resident £44·70 because of the iniquitous slip-up of not collecting last year, whereas the Conservative-controlled neighbouring authority of Gedling is charging only £3·40? Neighbouring Rushcliffe council was to charge £9 as a result of non-collection and other financial clauses, but made savings of £9, so that the residents of Rushcliffe have not a penny more to pay. That is the difference between Labour-controlled Nottingham city council and two neighbouring Tory-controlled councils.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Perhaps we can now return to the amendments before us.

Mr. Portillo: The comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South are, none the less, revealing. The most remarkable example is Lambeth, where the charge for non-collection is £140, compared with Wandsworth, where the total charge is £36.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Before the Minister leaves that point, he should think more carefully about what he is saying about local government. The Secretary of State quoted my local authority as one of the best collectors of the community charge. It is charging £19·77 for non-collection, of which £14·80 is interest charges for money that it had to borrow simply because the community charge was so much more difficult to collect than the rates.

It is apparent from local authorities throughout the country that the charge is being made not because people have not paid—they have paid—but because they have paid at the end of the year, whereas they used to pay rates every month. That is the main cause of the problem. People have been taken off the register because they have died or left the district and the local authority's calculations have been unable to take that into account. The fault lies not with the local authority or the collectors, but with the silly system under which they have had to work.

Mr. Portillo: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he makes my point for me. In Southampton, the full year——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I have been very tolerant, but I shall not allow a debate that does not relate to the amendments before us.

Mr. Portillo: In that case, Madam Deputy Chairman, the point will have to remain for another day.

Although the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), who opened this debate, made a clever speech, by his own high standards it was not outstandingly honest. He made a series of claims which, on reflection, he might regret. For example, he said that, as from today, valuers would value property on the basis of the Bill. He knows that that is not true and that the Bill must make progress to another place and receive royal assent, which will all take time. He also knows that valuers will not be able to make valuations before they know many of the important details to which he referred.

The hon. Gentleman tried to make the House believe that there was some inconsistency between the Bill's introduction and a consultation period on the exact details of the council tax. There is no inconsistency between those two points. We have always said that we want to introduce the council tax by 1 April 1993. To make that possible, we need Parliament's authority to spend money to start the valuation process. Clearly, all the details of that valuation have not yet been worked out.

I say that perfectly straightforwardly—moreover, I make a virtue of it, because we are in a consultation period. We have made firm proposals for the outlines of the tax, but have never claimed that all the details of the tax were already in place or should be in place, because we have always recognised that the tax will be run by local authorities to collect their own revenue. We must have the opinions of local authorities and experts.

The hon. Member for Brightside seemed to imply that the Audit Commission opposed the council tax. In an interview on the "Today" programme this morning, Mr. Peter Hobday asked Mr. Howard Davies whether he was suggesting that the tax was unworkable, and he said that he was not. Mr. Howard Davies has now written to *The Times* and said:

> "You reported that the Audit Commission believes 'the Government's new council tax is unworkable in its proposed form'. This is not so."

That could not be a clearer denial of the points that the hon. Gentleman sought to attribute to the Audit Commission.

Mr. Blunkett: I, too, heard Howard Davies on the "Today" programme. He said that the system proposed by the Government could not be worse than the poll tax.

Mr. Portillo: The way in which I quoted Howard Davies was perfectly accurate.

The hon. Member for Brightside then seemed to imply that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors was against the new tax. I had a private lunch with members of the RICS yesterday and am not at liberty to divulge exactly what was said. They have not yet put in their representation but will do so by the end of this week. Without betraying a confidence, I can reveal that they were supportive of the council tax, in particular the principle of a tax that allocates properties to bands, as they could see the immense administrative advantages in such a system. As professionals in that area, they had no difficulty with the concept that large swathes of property could be readily allocated to bands, which appealed to them as administratively simple and straightforward. Naturally, they will have detailed comments to make on the council tax and I shall welcome those. I am anxious that my officials should develop a close working relationship with professional bodies like the RICS, because I am determined that we should get the details of the Bill right.

The speech of the hon. Member for Brightside was not outstandingly honest because he tabled an amendment that sought to bring about a return to the rating system and then chose not to speak to it. He made a great speech about the council tax, but his amendment was about returning to the rating system. I am not surprised that he chose not to talk about that. If he intends to do so under the next amendment, I shall give my riposte then—or one of my hon. Friends will do so if they have the good fortune to wield the mallet.

Perhaps I should explain to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that the council tax will be based on a banding system of values. For that reason, it will not be susceptible to the treatment that he should like to give it. It will not necessitate detailed knowledge of every property but will be much more broad-brush that the old rating system. Many properties will not have to be inspected because they will clearly fall into one band or another. Therefore, the hon.Gentleman's idea of having a register of empty properties, although ingenious with merits in its own right, does not flow well from the Bill.

As the hon. Gentleman comes from Liverpool, I understand that he should want to raise that important issue. One is outraged not only by the non-payment—to which I shall not allude further—that has occurred in Liverpool but by the empty properties there. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) said that there may be reasons for empty properties, there are tremendous disparities between local authorities. Liverpool's performance on empty properties has been lamentable.

Some of the ideas of a citizens' charter which the Conservative party is developing seemed to run through the hon. Gentleman's speech. Yes, people have a right to better service from local authorities and the indicator of empty properties is important. It is a scandal that local authorities are keeping properties empty when there are people in temporary accommodation. We shall want to pursue directly some of those issues in our proposals for a citizens' charter. I rather doubt whether the Government would be in favour of a national register of such properties, but I shall refer that to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his consideration. However, we need to look carefully at requiring local authorities to deliver decent standards of service against objective criteria.

5 pm

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Minister for agreeing to refer that matter to the Secretary of State, and I hope that he makes progress on it. He will recall that I also asked him about the right of redress where there are discrepancies in services provided in different banded authorities, so that, for instance, in areas where bins have not been emptied for 13 weeks citizens would have the right of redress. Will the Minister ensure that something is done to put some teeth into the legislation and that it is enforced? I referred to the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which has not been enforced with regard to councils in Liverpool.

Mr. Portillo: The Environmental Protection Act gives the citizen the right to take action against a local authority. Citizens may not yet have availed themselves of those rights, perhaps because they are not aware of them, but the rights are there. The citizen is already enfranchised, but we may wish to look further at other ways in which to enfranchise the citizen.

Where I might to some extent part company with the hon. Gentleman is that I would put more emphasis than he would on the desirability of arming the citizen with choice and competition, whereas he might put more emphasis on—if I might describe them as such—bureaucratic solutions to such problems. However, we are on the same ground in saying that the citizen needs to be enfranchised, needs to have defence and needs to have redress against local authorities which fail to deliver the services to which people are entitled.

I come with pleasure to the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). He and my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) raised difficult issues to which the Government have given serious thought. My right hon. Friend was right to describe this as a fallen world and cautioned us against looking for perfection in these matters.

One is faced with two possibilities. If we went for regional bands, someone in the north-east of England might ask why he, living in a £50,000 house, should pay as much in council tax, which has a property element within it, as someone living in the south-east in a £150,000 house. I think that my right hon. Friend would agree that that question would cause considerable difficulty. My right hon. Friend raised the other point, which is why a person in the south-east living in a three-bedroomed house should pay more than someone living in a similar house in the north-east.

We have given considerable thought to those matters. We have put forward the firm proposal that we should base our council tax on a national banding system and, furthermore, that there should be seven bands, and we have suggested what the values of those bands should be. We are in a consultation period and we have made a firm proposal. I anticipate that the Government will continue to find that attractive. But it would be absurd to go through a consultation period without listening carefully to all the representations made, not least from someone who speaks with the authority and experience of my right hon. Friend. Therefore, we shall have to consider carefully what he said. But I am bound to say that we gave much thought to the matter before introducing the proposals.

Sir Rhodes Boyson *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: After I have given way to my right hon. Friend, I will put some other points to him that I should like him to consider.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am grateful to hear that the Minister is still in the consultation period, and I shall be interested to see how much today's debate influences the outcome. I remind my hon. Friend that my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) said that, if we adopted rebuilding values rather than capital values, the great discrepancies which the price of land gives rise to in London compared with elsewhere would be largely minimised.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend is right in that respect, but then another problem arises. My right hon. Friend should remember how, under the rating system, one of the great problems was the obscurity of the rateable value. People could not relate to a rateable value. They would never be in the business of renting their properties, on which the rateable value was based. There was scarcely any market in rented housing, so people were left with entirely synthetic spurious values. The same problem arises with rebuilding costs or anything like that. Those are synthetic, spurious values which the average person would not recognise. Under the council tax that we propose, they will be able to see clearly the relationship between the

[Mr. Portillo]

value on which they are paying the tax and the value of the house as they recognise it—as, for example, it might appear in an estate agent's window.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): In the light of the comments that the Minister has just made, I remind him of some comments that he made on 19 October last year, the day after my election to the House. I am informed that he said:

"Taxes on people's homes are unfair. Property values bear little relation to people's ability to pay."

Have you done a U-turn, are you standing on your head or do you have some other information to give us?

Mr. Portillo: I am sure that you, Miss Boothroyd, to whom those questions were addressed, are doing none of those things, and it is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should suggest it.

I have frequently expressed my disappointment that we were unable to convince people of the fairness of the community charge. However, I am deeply satisfied that we are now proposing a council tax which has two elements —a property and a personal element. What makes me unhappy about the Labour party's proposal is that it still makes no distinction between households with one person and those with a larger number of people. One of the strengths of the council tax is that different rates of tax will be applied depending on the number of people in the household and that rate will vary according to what the local authority is spending.

Mr. Tracey: Let me bring my hon. Friend back to the question of valuation based on capital values as opposed to rebuilding costs. I cannot accept that a rebuild cost valuation is spurious in the way that the old rateable value based on some theoretical rent was. He is right to say that nobody could recognise that theoretical rent, but people could certainly recognise the rebuild cost. The insurance companies recognise those rebuild costs and if an owner is unfortunate enough to have his house burnt out or severely damaged, the insurance company rebuilds it on those values. Therefore, it is relevant and recognisable by the people.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend and I may not entirely agree on that point. I think that there is a real problem in telling people that they will be taxed on a value which is not the value that they think of as the value of their house —the value for which they can sell it if they so choose. Rebuilding costs have many problems. For example, pre-1920 houses have different rebuilding costs from houses built after that date. One just introduces another area of dispute when one goes for something such as rebuilding costs. One then ends up with the problem that within, for example, the borough of Westminster, the rebuilding cost of a small penthouse in the most salubrious part of Kensington is rather low because it is only a small property, whereas the rebuilding cost of a five-bedroomed dilapidated house in north Kensington, perhaps under the flyover, is much higher. It would be difficult to convince people that that was a fair system.

I return to the defence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, who said that it was difficult to achieve perfection in these areas, but I am concerned to protect the taxpayers in my right hon. Friend's constituency and in my own. Let us face it, that is why we have done a number of important things. For example, we have suggested that, within the council tax, the maximum variation in the tax that households of equal size should pay would be that those at the top end should pay about two thirds more than the average and those in the least valuable properties should pay about two thirds of the average. That provides protection, and it is a great improvement on the rating system.

We have taken £140 off the community charge and put it on value added tax. In doing so, we have massively altered the balance between what is raised locally and what is raised nationally. The proportion of nationally and locally raised taxation will continue under the new system, which will provide a great deal of protection for my right hon. Friend's constituents. I should not be surprised—indeed, I would lay odds on it—if many of his constituents were not better off under the council tax than they were last year under the community charge or under the rating system the previous year.

Although people will compare the difference between what they were paying in the last year of the community charge and the first year of the council tax, it is a robust defence to say that we have made an important change in what we seek to take from local people. That will be continued under the new council tax, and we shall seek to raise from people sums of money that we believe are sustainable and fair.

For all those reasons, the Committee would be right to give Parliament the authority outlined in the clause to provide the funds so that we can begin the valuation process. As the Audit Commission said, it would be desirable to introduce the new tax by 1 April 1993. The Labour party has claimed that it would like the community charge to go as fast as possible, but it now seems unwilling to co-operate in ensuring the means to replace it by 1993.

The consultation period on the council tax has not ended. We shall take seriously the points made by my right hon. Friends, by the professional bodies and by local authorities. The fact that we are today seeking authority to begin the process of financing the valuation process in no way touches the consultation period, nor does it seek to prejudge it. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will agree that it is right that we should settle the details as quickly as possible and be able to start the valuation process. Despite the important doubts that my right hon. and hon. Friends have expressed today, I hope that they will accept the clause and reject the amendments.

Mr. Blunkett: I should like to make it clear to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that those of us who have worked hard and long to establish the idea of a citizens' charter, of quality and of the individual's right to redress are committed to ensuring that people's bins are emptied regularly and that houses are let so that people on the housing waiting list or who are homeless have a roof over their heads. We are also committed to ensuring that that is done in a participatory way which enhances the working of local democracy. It is certain that no citizens' charter from any political party will prevent in an industrial dispute problems such as those that have arisen in Liverpool. A financial penalty on a local authority would mean merely that it would be in the authority's interests to settle at whatever rate was

demanded by those taking action against it, whatever the circumstances and whatever the long-term cost to the community. That would be farcical and untenable.

Mr. Alton: Surely the hon. Gentleman would be the first to agree that, in a city where every local authority employee's redundancy notice from the political masters was delivered in a fleet of private hire cars on one occasion, and in a city which is currently awash with refuse and rubbish because of the local authority's failure, there must be not merely a right of redress but direct intervention —if necessary by the use of private companies—to remove the refuse. That would ensure that people did not become the victims, which is what is happening in Liverpool at the moment.

Mr. Blunkett: Some of us are in the business of trying to settle rather than exacerbate disputes, and of finding solutions for the people of Liverpool rather than scoring petty political points. We shall continue to try to do that. I put it on record that everyone in the country expects local Government to ensure that houses are let and that people on the waiting list who are in desperate need of decent accommodation get it. We shall do our best to ensure that that happens through the quality commission.

I shall deal briefly with the comments made by the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and by the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey). Although they dealt with the wrong amendments, we share their worries and feelings. I shall encourage them to vote with us on this and a later amendment.

With reference to the comments made by the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), one can hardly blame a local authority that is taking people to court because of the cost of interest rates incurred last year. Those interest rates were occasioned by the Government. Local authorities have had to recoup last year's losses, to predict this year's and face another two years of continuing losses because of the poll tax. Everyone has accepted that, not least the Audit Commission, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will no doubt state in a moment.

I was entertained by the idea that people would be happy with a system that took a couple of sample properties and applied its findings to the whole of a housing estate. I do not think that people would be too pleased about that if it were carried out in practice. They may have one or two things to say about it in the run-up to the general election.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hill: First, several well-known Labour supporters still have not paid their community charge in Southampton. Secondly, I did not suggest that there would be two valuations for the whole of the city. I said that seven bands were sufficient and that for many properties —certainly those used for council accommodation— blueprints in the civic centre could be used for valuation without even a site visit. That is common practice in an overall valuation, which is not detailed.

Mr. Blunkett: I respect the fact that estate agents—I know that the hon. Gentleman knows all about this—will be able to make a spot guess at a sale price in a given area. I ask the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members to ponder whether individuals who are charged on that basis will be happy that someone is sitting behind a desk taking a spot guess at the market price of a property. That is no way either to value a property or to impose a tax which will be based on the value of the property in a particular band.

I am grateful for the Minister's compliments, and I shall meet head on his charge of dishonesty. I accept that valuers will not go out next week—they went out last week and in April. They were instructed to make valuations from the desk top from 22 February to 1 March, and they were then asked to do a quick spot check in April but without letting anyone know. It was only when we revealed that fact that the system changed—following our revelation on 26 April, the valuation process that had just begun was stopped. The valuers were working and will work as soon as the House of Lords has given its approval —presumably next week—and as soon as the royal assent has been gained. I accept that the dishonesty will not take place tomorrow, but in a fortnight's time. The difference is so spurious that it shows how the Minister has had to scrape the barrel to accuse me of dishonesty.

On 26 April and again on 29 April, the Secretary of State vehemently denied that there would be a move away from the seven bands. In fact, he repeated 10 days later that there was no question, whatever the consultation produced, of moving away from them. Therefore, for the Minister to tell his Back Benchers tonight that the consultation between now and Friday is serious is extremely misleading and, to use his word and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham, dishonest. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors can speak for itself, but if that is dishonest, it will be surprised to hear what the Minister said, because placing properties in bands for a rolling continuing valuation is different from using bands as a method of valuation in the first place.

The Minister's other charge of dishonesty was that I should have been arguing for a return to the rates. I rest my case by saying that the next group of amendments deal precisely with that issue. The case that we have made this afternoon is unanswerable, and if Conservative Members do not vote for the amendment, they will live to regret it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 191, Noes 278.

Division No. 167] **[5.20 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Caborn, Richard
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Callaghan, Jim
Allen, Graham	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Alton, David	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Canavan, Dennis
Armstrong, Hilary	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Carr, Michael
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Cartwright, John
Ashton, Joe	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clelland, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Barron, Kevin	Cryer, Bob
Battle, John	Cummings, John
Beckett, Margaret	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Beith, A. J.	Cunningham, Dr John
Bell, Stuart	Darling, Alistair
Bellotti, David	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Dewar, Donald
Blair, Tony	Dixon, Don
Blunkett, David	Dobson, Frank
Boyes, Roland	Douglas, Dick
Bradley, Keith	Duffy, A. E. P.
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Eastham, Ken

Edwards, Huw
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick

Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr.David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Gould: I beg to move amendment No. 24, in page 2, line 35, leave out 'all' and insert 'new'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 26: page 2, line 47, leave out from 'of' to end of line 49 and insert—

(a) in the case of England and Wales, updating the valuation list in respect of domestic hereditaments on 31st March 1990 by adding to that list existing domestic hereditaments not included in the list; and

(b) in the case of Scotland, updating the valuations roll in respect of domestic subjects on 31st March 1989 by adding to that roll existing domestic subjects not included in the roll'.

Mr. Gould: The amendment is designed to offer the Government a means of getting off a hook of their own creation. The hook arises because of the Government's insistence on introducing, as a condition of getting rid of the poll tax, a whole new system of valuation. That in turn gives rise to a large number of uncertainties, which gives rise to further delays and problems and calls into question the Government's ability to implement a council tax by their stated target date of 1 April 1993.

I offer this amendment as a means of helping the Government, although I have little expectation that they will accept it. The amendment is a gesture to reinforce an offer we made some time ago that we would co-operate on a short Bill which would get rid of the poll tax within a year by means of returning to the existing 1973 valuation list. That would enable us to implement something like our fair rates scheme by 1 April 1992 and then concentrate on a sensible revaluation to bring the list up to date.

Although I renew my offer of help through the amendment, I have little expectation that the Government will be any more welcoming to it than they were on the previous occasion. Nevertheless, I advance the amendment because it gives me an opportunity to vent some of the concerns which have been expressed by a wide range of people about the achievability of the Government's timetable and because it gives the Under-Secretary of State a chance to allay some of those fears.

As the Under-Secretary of State will know, ever since the proposals and the timetable were advanced, genuine doubts have been expressed—not just on our side of the House, although we have certainly expressed them—by a range of experts and people who are directly affected, about whether the timetable can be met. I cite only the local authority associations and the professional associations of valuers who have been sceptical about the Government's chance of hitting that target.

This morning I listened to Radio 4, as I am sure many hon. Members did, and I heard the treasurer of Huntingdon—the Prime Minister's constituency—express great scepticism. He said, fairly and directly, that he doubted whether the timetable could be adhered to unless it could be established as a condition that everything that needed to be done was done at least a year before the target date. That compression of the timetable is a point well taken and shows that there are genuine doubts about the Government's timetable.

The body most recently to express anxiety about the timetable was the Audit Commission, in an excellent response to the Government's consultation paper which it published today. The report is pleasant reading to us because it deals in detail with some points that we have been arguing in recent months. It confirms each one in turn, so we welcome the report on that ground alone.

The Audit Commission is, rightly, more circumspect about the timetable. It does not say that the timetable is unachievable. It recognises, as we do, that given the tremendous political will behind the proposal, if everything goes well and we are prepared to take tremendous risks with the viability of the scheme, we might just about hit the target. It is unlikely, great risks are involved and all sorts of assumptions favourable to the Government must be made, but it would be a foolish person who said that the timetable could not be met.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I shall complete this point, then I shall certainly give way.

However—this may help the Under-Secretary of State with his intervention—any fair reading of the Audit

[Mr. Gould]

Commission's response recognises that, having conceded that theoretical point, the Commission is full of scepticism about the chances of meeting the timetable.

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman gently slid sideways from his interpretation of what the Audit Commission is alleged to say to his view. This morning he will have heard the controller of the Audit Commission say on the "Today" programme:

"So we're saying that councils must try to introduce by April 1993. Many of them say it can't be done, we think it can be done and furthermore, it must be done."

Mr. Gould: The Under-Secretary of State has only confirmed what I said. He also gave the authentic flavour of Mr. Howard Davies's remarks: it was imperative to meet that date and would be extremely dangerous—that is the whole thrust of the paper—if it were not met, because of all the unfortunate consequences, which he goes on to explain and which I shall detail to the House. Naturally, he is obliged to say, "Yes, we must hit the target date because the consequences of failing are so appalling." That is precisely his message.

Anyone who reads the Audit Commission's response objectively will recognise its great doubts on that score and the important, difficult conditions which it sets if that target date is to be met. The Audit Commission, local authority associations, valuers and the treasurer for Huntingdon all say that the following must be in place if that target is to be met.

First—let us bear in mind that, if we accept the arguments of the Huntingdon treasurer, this is all a year in advance—the legislation must be completed and on the statute book. I have not yet heard the legislative timetable from Ministers, but it would be pushing things a bit to complete the legislation by 1 April next year. We shall have to see, but it will be a major Bill. It would be extremely unwise to rush these matters, given the unfortunate experience of the Government's earlier essays in this field. If the Government are saying that they expect to have the Bill by 1 April, that shows how cavalier they are prepared to be about dismissing the warnings offered to them by the experts.

There will not just have to be a Bill; there will also have to be regulations. They will determine the sort of software that will have to be obtained. One aspect that made the introduction of the poll tax so difficult was the unreliability and unpreparedness of the software to which local authorities were forced to turn to deal with these great problems. The software cannot be obtained without the regulations or without detailing the valuation. A valuation list will have to be in place; so will details about how the personal discounts are to work. There will need to be details about how the rebate system is to work. All that has to be achieved well in advance of 1 April next year so that the local authorities can order and obtain the necessary software and so that they will have a fair run at meeting the Government's timetable.

One does not need to be a genius to recognise that in all this there is a great deal of uncertainty and to understand, therefore, why the prevailing tone of the Audit Commission's response is one of continuing and marked scepticism.

Mr. Douglas: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is talking about the interim period in England. We are in an intense pre-general election period. Assuming that there will not be an election until the spring of 1992, what would the Labour party do between then and April 1993? I understand the quick fix proposed in the amendments, but they are not necessarily in Labour's electoral gift. How would the Labour party bridge the gap between the demise of the poll tax and the introduction of "fair rates"?

Mr. Gould: In one sense the matter is within our gift, in that we have made the Government an offer that they have turned down. When we return to power, as most people now accept is likely——

Mr. Key: I do not.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman has a notably bad record on a number of these issues—including his support until recently for the principle of the poll tax.

To answer the point made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), we shall have to look at the position that we inherit, but we have the great comfort of knowing that since last year we have had a fair rates proposal which can be implemented within a year of our taking office. We shall have to see where the Government have got us by the time they finally face the electorate.

As the Audit Commission and others have pointed out, only two years are allowed to elapse between the Government's publication of their consultation paper and their target date for implementing the new tax—based on the totally new valuation—which no one has ever tried before. So, within two years of the consultation paper, the Government claim blithely, everything will be in place and working satisfactorily. As the Commission points out, four years were allowed for the poll tax and they proved inadequate. We can only conclude that two years is a stupidly over-ambitious target. That is why we believe that the Government are foolish to turn down our offer of help to get themselves off the hook.

These delays—the delay of two years is bad enough, but if the Audit Commission and others are right, at least a further year's delay is involved—matter considerably. They matter to the poll tax payers who, having been led to believe that the poll tax has somehow been brought to an end will be disconcerted, to say the least, to discover that the poll tax, with all its unfairness and unworkability, is still hanging around. The bills will keep on coming. They will become fairly alarmed and they will also be aware that for as long as the poll tax survives they will be paying bills that are unnecessarily high. Our calculation, which has not been seriously challenged, is that bills for the average household will unnecessarily be £140 higher than they should have been under a fair rates scheme——

Mr. Hind: Not so.

Mr. Gould: It is certainly so.

It is not just the poll tax payers who will be in difficulties. The Audit Commission is rightly concerned about the viability of local government having to administer for another two or perhaps three years a system which no longer has a single friend to support it.

5.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Gentleman spoke a few minutes ago about Labour's scheme being in place within a year. Will that involve merely going back to the old

rating system, or will it be the new "fair rates" system? If the latter, how can he criticise the Government for taking two years to move to the council tax?

Mr. Gould: As I have said on previous occasions, it is always astonishing that Conservative Members—in this case, a Minister—should come into the Chamber to intervene in debates with points that reveal their abysmal ignorance of what they are supposed to be talking about. If the hon. Gentleman had bothered for a moment—I understand why he did not; he chose to avert his gaze from things that displease him—to read our fair rates proposals which we published nearly a year ago, he would see that they describe in great detail exactly what I am talking about—a phased means of replacing the poll tax, first by returning immediately for the sake of speed and simplicity to the rates and then by concentrating on improving the rebate scheme and on bringing in a new valuation register and linking it to ability to pay. All that is set out in the document and I am surprised by the Minister's unfamiliarity with it.

I was making the point that we can get rid of the poll tax by 1 April 1992. That offer remains open to the Government.

As I said earlier, these matters are of great concern not only to poll tax payers but to local government. The Audit Commission is worried that the survival of the poll tax will threaten what remains of the viability of local government finance. We know that the problems of collecting the poll tax in the remaining period are serious and that they will get worse. Those problems are already well documented by the Audit Commission. They have accounted for more than £1 billion-worth of poll tax not yet being collected. We have the example of Scotland to show us that the problems will only get worse year by year and there are exacerbating factors which mean that many people have been persuaded by irresponsible Government propaganda that the poll tax has gone and that they need no longer bother about it—the idea being that, if the Government have lost confidence in it and have agreed that it is unfair and unworkable, surely people will not be required to pay it. The problems are being stoked up, and they are horrific to contemplate.

The Audit Commission rightly points, as the Prime Minister has on occasion pointed, to the difficulties of collecting the poll tax. The Prime Minister's remark was a good deal less measured than that of the Audit Commission. The Commission simply states that the poll tax is difficult to collect; the Prime Minister said that it was uncollectable. Whatever phrase one chooses, the truth is that the poll tax, as we always warned, was deficient because it was so easily avoided and because people innocently moved round the country to a much greater degree than we had ever suspected when the notion of an individual register was first contemplated.

The poll tax is also difficult to collect because it is widely regarded as unfair. People feel no obligation to comply with the law in this respect—unfortunately. That is regrettable, but it is an unavoidable consequence of a tax that is unfair and widely resisted.

For all those reasons, the Audit Commission rightly devoted a substantial part of its report to the problems of collecting the poll tax. It identified more than £1 billion of revenue that has not been collected for the past financial year. I invite anyone who doubts the seriousness of the problem to read paragraphs 6 to 10 of the Audit Commission's report. Those who seek to turn this difficult issue to party advantage by complaining, as did the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), that the local authority in the city was obliged to charge its poll tax payers this year up to £50 because of the non-collection rate for last year, are adding insult to injury. That is typical of the Government. They smear local government instead of acknowledging the deficiencies of the tax which have created difficulties for local authorities. That is the truth of the matter.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What about Lambeth?

Mr. Gould: Of course, the pattern differs from one authority to another, but the Audit Commission is clear that the problems faced responsibly and rigorously by local authorities are, nevertheless, in danger of overwhelming them.

As Conservative Members are unwilling to accept that point, I shall give the flavour of the Audit Commission's report. Paragraph 7 says:

"The Commission has drawn attention in previous papers to collection problems compounding as authorities pursue two years recovery action in 1991-92. Almost 4·5 million summonses were issued up to March 31 1991"—

so much for the inactivity of local government—

"resulting in 3·2 million liability orders. The courts have issued more than four times as many summonses than in any of the last five years of the former rates system. This is a considerable achievement, but many authorities still have a substantial backlog of original summonses to be brought. In addition only 210 means enquiries (the first stage in committal proceedings) had been held by March 31 1991; individual committal hearings for non-payment in 1990-91 will probably take up a large part of available court time in the current year."

Ministers are doing local government and the House no service by pretending that the problems are the fault of lazy or inefficient local authorities.

The Audit Commission estimates that, for every year in which the poll tax survives, the local authorities will lose £800 million. To put that figure in perspective, it concludes that they will lose £900 million per year in non-collection —they budgeted for a lower non-collection rate of 4 per cent.—and that the additional administrative costs of the poll tax will be £525 million. It deducted the comparable costs of administering the council tax, and that is how it came up with a figure of £800 million.

The Labour party thinks that that is an interesting and alarming figure and a considerable underestimate of the real cost of the additional years of the poll tax. We prefer the analysis of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. It calculates that, for the forthcoming financial year, the non-collection rate will be 15 per cent., not 10 per cent. as estimated by the Audit Commission. That will account for a loss of £1,450 million. The additional administrative costs will be £600 million, making a total loss of £2,050 million. The AMA deducts from that figure the administrative costs and the lower collection levels appropriate to the rates—£390 million. That means a net loss of £1,660 million for the next financial year, during which the poll tax will survive.

I shall not weary the House with the further calculation which shows that, if the poll tax survived for a further year —which seems all too likely—the loss would be even greater. The AMA estimates that, if the poll tax survives for another two years, the total loss will be £3·77 billion. That will make life almost impossible for local authorities, but they must contemplate that nightmare, because the

[Mr. Gould]

Government show no sign of taking the point seriously. They have been so preoccupied with the short-term political exercise of distancing themselves from the poll tax that they have not given a thought to the problems that they are creating for local government. I regret that and hope that this short debate will at least enable the Government to face up to some of those problems.

Let me say in passing that the Audit Commission endorses a further point that we believe to be of great importance. It says that, in order to reduce losses, it would be sensible to abandon and abolish the 20 per cent. contribution rule, which raises only £6 per person in revenue and costs £15 per person to administer. I hope that the Government will take that point, because if they do not they will be showing that they are not only dogmatic and short-sighted, but stupid. Given the history of the poll tax, we should not be surprised at that harsh judgment.

The amendment allows the Minister to face up to the doubts and difficulties and to assure us that the Government are not about to reproduce and repeat the unhappy poll tax exercise in which they pushed through an idea that had been hastily cobbled together, with lavish assurances to their supporters that it would be all right on the night. If the Government implement the new tax in that way, they will again create all sorts of problems for individual payers and for local government.

Mr. Douglas: I do not intend to speak at length. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) dealt specifically with the situation in England. The poll tax was introduced in Scotland a year earlier, so the problems are much more severe—especially in the Strathclyde region, where half the population of Scotland lives, and in Lothian. In those two regions and in the rest of Scotland, the rates of non-collection because of non-payment are high and increasing.

We can all suggest reasons for that. Some people say that it is because nasty people have persuaded others in certain regions not to pay. That is false. No one needed to persuade those in Scotland who could not afford to pay to participate in the non-payment compaign. They did not pay because they did not have the income. Massive surveys, especially in Strathclyde, have shown that. However, that is in the past.

As the hon. Member for Dagenham said, the Government have given the impression that the poll tax is dead. When we discuss other amendments, I shall suggest how the council tax can be speedily introduced in Scotland. However, that is another matter; what we are now discussing is which quick fix to adopt. The hon. Member for Dagenham suggested that England and Wales should return to the rating system, using the information available. Amendment No. 26 proposes that the latest information on the rating system is used in Scotland. That is a possibility, but that information would have to be uprated to take account of inflation, and legislation would be required. We would have to discuss whether there should be an appeals procedure.

I am not unhappy to contemplate a quick fix. The Scottish National party has suggested the quick fix of having local government finance funded from general taxation.

In the short run, that could be related to the general level of income tax. In the short term, the payments could be related to income tax levels. The Government have themselves contemplated the use of such a quick fix, but favoured a connection with indirect rather than direct taxation. What worries me is that, in the interim, Scottish local authorities are in severe difficulties because of the level of non-payment, the impossibility of collecting the tax and the impression given by the Government that the poll tax no longer exists.

Mr. Key: The Government have not given that impression.

6 pm

Mr. Douglas: The Minister is too insular to know what is happening in Scotland. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is sitting next to him, may or may not agree, but I am sure that he is aware of the level of non-payment and non-collection in Scotland. I am reasonably sure—although I cannot be certain of anything—that that level will rise rather than fall.

I remember, a long time ago, sitting in the miners' club with an old miner. Looking at the bottom line of figures on his pay slip, he would say, "That more and more is making me take home less and less." The continued imposition of the poll tax will make collection levels become lower and lower, placing heavier burdens on local authorities.

The Government do not recognise that, but I am equally concerned about the Opposition's failure to recognise it. They seem to believe that they can introduce their own quick fix by returning to the 1989 rating position in Scotland, or to the 1987 position in England and Wales. Such action, would not bridge the gap effectively: we require legislation. I do not know what an incoming Labour Government would do, but it is highly unlikely that they would get any legislation into gear in six months. It would take another year.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman may or may not know—there is no particular reason why he should know, but Ministers do—that we drafted a short Bill that would have achieved all that was necessary, and, given the necessary co-operation, could have completed its passage in a single day.

Mr. Douglas: I do not understand the position in England and Wales; but, if we returned to the rating system in Scotland, we would bring back the whole paraphernalia of appeals. That will arise in connection with this Bill. People have made improvements to their properties. Whatever may be said about the way in which the banding system would relate to such improvements, it cannot be denied that they must be taken into account.

I do not want to take up too much time, and I would be called to order if I embarked on a detailed examination of the way in which Scottish rates were assessed. Let me say simply that they had to bear some relation to the rent that could be charged in a market that was in equilibrium—and markets, of course, are not always in equilibrium. It would not be acceptable to argue about prices on the basis of the 1989 position, updated to take account of inflation. It would also take some time.

Let me assure the hon. Member for Dagenham that I am not playing games. If the Government started immediately, they might just manage to introduce the new system by 1 April 1992, although they would be lucky to do so. If my party's suggestion were adopted and they

embarked immediately on the introduction of a local income tax, the process could be completed very quickly. All the necessary information is there, and the computerisation of centre 1 in East Kilbride would make it much easier.

I hope that I have conveyed some of my feelings to the Minister.

Mr. Hind: Let me begin where the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) left off. I remember serving on the Standing Committee on the Transport Bill in 1985: my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), now Minister of State, Scottish Office, sat signing hundreds of letters to irate Scottish constituents who had rightly protested about the high rates that had followed the revaluations. I do not believe that the Scottish people will now wish to take up the offer extended by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and return to the rating system.

My own constituents cheered when we got rid of the rates, which they regarded as an inequitable system with very little merit—an antiquated system that should be scrapped. Certainly a return to it would not be greeted with resounding cheers in my part of Lancashire. The rating system involves no accountability, and reflects neither the income of the ratepayer not the number of people living in a household. Let us forget such nonsense, which is unacceptable to the electorate and is consequently unlikely to be adopted by the House of Commons.

I am sorry that the council tax cannot be introduced before April 1992 and that we must wait another 12 months. If, however, extra time is needed for proper planning and consultation so that we can get it right and avoid the mistakes that we made with the community charge, I shall be more than happy to allow that extra time. The hon. Member for Dagenham shakes his head, but I assure him that no quick fix is available. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West made that very clear, on behalf of English, Welsh and Scottish electors.

The hon. Member for Dagenham has talked a lot of nonsense today. He wants to introduce a new system within a year, and has criticised the Government for taking two years. He cannot have his cake and eat it, although that is clearly what he is trying to do. The nonsense about the £140 saving on his "fair rates" scheme sounds all very well and good, but people can say anything when they have published no figures and no one has any idea of the cost base of their proposals. All that can be assumed from an analysis of the hon. Gentleman's figures is that he intends to collect £6·3 billion from the electorate by way of rates. We shall be collecting £6·8 billion. He will have to collect the £500 million difference from the electorate by way of direct taxation, which will mean higher income tax.

I view Labour's suggestion very sceptically. Let us take time to get the system right. I urge the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) is entirely right to regard Labour's prospectus as false. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), with his customery silver tongue, spoke of the uncertainties, the questions, the delays and the target dates. He made the Government a wonderful offer: he offered to go back to 1973 valuations and abolish the poll tax. That would be so nice, but it is what we do next that matters, rather than the simple act of producing a Bill to abolish the poll tax—a fatuous political gimmick if ever there was one. I am the first to acknowledge that the hon. Member for Dagenham has a silver tongue, although I do not know whether it bears a hallmark. Today, however, he has made a silver hook for it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A forked silver tongue.

Mr. Key: I would never go that far.

The hon. Gentleman has again pretended that the so-called "fair rates" could be in place by 1992, only 10 months from now. I have searched his document "Fair Rates" in vain for any of the certainties that he alleges to lie within its few pages. There are no certainties. The document does not explain any of the questions about Labour's timetable that the hon. Gentleman so frequently claims that it does answer. He has failed to realise that such a proposal would come up against many of the same difficulties which he has claimed would delay the council tax. New legislation and new regulations would be needed, as would a new grant system and, for most local authorities, new software. Most local authorities have introduced new computers for the community charge system, and he is wrong to suggest that local authorities could simply return to the rates for next year. That is not an option.

Calling a rates system a fair rates system does not make it so. The hon. Member for Dagenham's system fails to recognise the problem of single people. It is a system under which unlimited amounts could be charged and it suggests that two changes rather than one would have to be made: returning to the 1973 figures, and then introducing another system. There would be multiple valuations on different bases and, above all, there would be no restraint—no capping: of that we are quite sure.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) could not conceal his frustration with his former colleague, and I can understand that because he is right: the hon. Member for Dagenham did not answer his question on timing.

As regards Scotland, the grants for local authorities have been advanced to help cash flow, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West will acknowledge that. The situation will not be as bad as he suggests. I recognise that the mood of the Committee is that we should progress, but the fact is that these amendments are designed to restrict the valuation process to new property and to updating the old valuation list. They seek to return to the discredited rating system and are very undesirable.

Memories are not that short. People throughout the country will remember the unfairness of the old rating system. Anyone living in a flat or a newer house will recall the feeling that they suffered from higher rates than their neighbours. They will recall the irritation of finding that every time that they improved their homes, built a garage or made an extension they were faced with someone checking up on what they had done—Big Brother coming to extract his dues. A higher bill would be a punishment for seeking to improve one's property. Labour wants us to return to all that.

But that is not all. As I said, memories are not that short. People will remember the incomprehensibility of how the system worked—a system based on notional rental values. However ingenious the valuers might be, to base an entire system of local government finance on private sector rental values when only 2 or 3 per cent. of

[Mr. Key]

the housing stock is in the private rented sector is sheer lunacy. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members find this laughable, but I find it laughable that they should suggest that we should reintroduce notional rental values. In Scotland, the position is even worse because we updated values to the 1985 base there, and we can remember the pain and anguish that that caused. The amendment seeks to turn the clock back and to use that valuation. I have some good advice for Opposition Members: the people of Scotland will not wear it. Their memories are no shorter than those south of the border.

Mr. Donald Dewar: (Glasgow, Garscadden): I do not wish to prolong the debate, but has the Minister bothered to consider any of the public opinion polls on this subject in Scotland? They have all suggested that the Scots would prefer this solution. Has he taken into account the views of the assessors? Perhaps there should be a respectful silence while the Parliamentary Under-Secretary produces a cover story. Has the Minister noted that the assessor for Lothian, for example—who is going to be entrusted, thanks to the Government's about-turn, with the valuation process in connection with the new tax, and who took the view that the Labour party scheme was practical—commended it as it would cut a year off the Government's present timetable?

Mr. Key: I am delighted to welcome the hon. Gentleman to the debate—even though he has been here for only one minute and 30 seconds. I assure him that I keep close tabs on what is happening in Scotland because I have a Scottish wife, I was employed in Scotland, and I am well aware that the people of Scotland have strong views about the many different possible rating systems that the Labour party has suggested.

Even though the hon. Member for Dagenham may delude himself into believing that his hon. Friends think that his proposals are good, I suspect that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West and his hon. Friends would strongly disagree. This amendment is even more misguided than I have suggested. I have listened carefully to what Opposition Members have said. I believe that they envisage a system where not only are people living in properties that were subject to the old rating system condemned to a return to those old unlamented rateable values, but also people living in new properties. Those in new properties will be subject to valuers coming round, no doubt scratching their heads and sticking their fingers in the air first for inspiration, to try to decide how much the rental value—entirely hypothetically of course—of a new house might have been in 1973, had it been built.

It is nonsense, Opposition Members know it is nonsense, but in their desperation they have nothing better to put forward. I call upon the Committee to reject a return to the rates, which is what these amendments seek.

6.15 pm

Mr. Gould: I found the Minister's reply a rather depressing experience in that he failed to tackle the serious purpose of the debate and the serious matters that we raised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is quite right. It is true not only in Scotland but throughout the country that whenever polling evidence on people's preferences for funding local government through local revenue raising is taken, polls show that our fair rates proposals—or proposals described in those terms and similar to our proposals—are three times more popular than any other proposal.

Not surprisingly, the poll tax always languishes at the bottom, but I am sorry to say that even a local income tax finds it difficult to feature.

Mr. Key: What about the roof tax?

Mr. Gould: The roof tax may have been lower for a brief period, but in the country as a whole fair rates scored very well indeed.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) sat through the debate, if my eyes did not deceive me, yet seems to have completely failed to understand the matters that were being discussed. I think that he was attempting to encourage his hon. Friends to ignore the possibility of replacing the poll tax by 1 April 1992, because they ought to take all the time in the world to consult, make leisurely preparations and so forth, so that they can do that job by 1 April 1993. He seems to have completely ignored the case that I, the Audit Commission and many other people have been arguing for quite some time—that it is the date of 1 April 1993 which is the difficulty, if one insists on introducing a totally new scheme. That is the quick fix. That is what is taking risks with local government finance. That is the great gamble that the Government have once more recklessly embarked upon.

If we really want to take time, it would be in the interests of local government and everyone else for the Government to say now that they propose to take at least until 1 April 1994, if they persist with this proposal.

The Minister failed to deal with any of the arguments about the likelihood of delay or the adverse consequences of delay. That fact made the debate such a disappointment and made his reply so depressing. However, as I have by now become a little cynical about these matters, and as I despair of the Government approaching them with true seriousness of purpose, I see little point in urging at any greater length Minister to face the facts and the truth. I suspect that salvation will arrive by a quite different course fairly shortly. For those reasons, and as I do not believe that this proposal will ever be implemented, I do not wish to press the matter. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 50, in page 2, line 40, leave out

'acting under the direction of those Commissioners;'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 6, in page 2, line 40, leave out 'direction' and insert 'guidance'.

No. 7, in clause 5, page 5, leave out lines 4 and 5 and insert—

'(3) The Commissioners of Inland Revenue may, after consultation with the local assessor, issue guidances in relation to the valuation to be undertaken, having regard to established Scottish usage.'

No. 8, in clause 5, page 5, leave out lines 4 and 5.

Mr. Dewar: The amendment is comparatively simple and seeks further information. I intend to dispose of it fairly briefly in the expectation—perhaps I should not be so confident—in the hope that there will be a brief stand

part part debate on clause 3. I am glad that the Minister is nodding his agreement. That will allow us to raise conveniently one or two questions about the valuation system in Scotland and may, on balance, shorten the time that the Committee has to sit. However, I want to ask the Minister one or two questions.

I am sorry that the Under-Secretary of State, who chastised me for being in the House only occasionally, has already departed. I was looking forward to discussing with him the role of the Minister's wife. She is not an archetypal or representative figure in Scottish society, wherever she may have been born. She is a well-known character in children's games, and there was an interesting theme to be developed.

I shall confine my remarks to the proper matter for the debate, which is the role of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue in the valuation system in Scotland. I am considerably interested in that, and I took the trouble this morning—I will not say that I did a great deal of research—to discover who the commissioners are. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that the Minister's wife's husband has returned. The commissioners are the individual members of the board of Inland Revenue, and the Committee may be delighted to know that the chief valuer, who will no doubt become an important figure in Scottish local government, is Mr. R. R. B. Shutter—which seems entirely appropriate.

I wish to ask the Minister about the role of the commissioners. I recognise that it was dealt with on Second Reading, and I challenged the Secretary of State for the Environment on the matter during his opening speech. He said:

"That is an important point".

I accept that: otherwise I would not have intervened. He added:

"there should be parity of valuation in Scotland, England and Wales. It is our intention for the Inland Revenue to mastermind the valuation exercise . . . and give appropriate directives so that the Scottish valuations are in line with those in England and Wales."—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 61.]

That is an obtrusive role. It is not necessarily a bad one, but it is one that we should know more about.

From my earlier inquiries, I got the impression that it would occur very occasionally and that day-to-day operations would remain with the assessors in Scotland and only if there were some dispute, for example, if there were a nice argument about the contractors principle—a vexed question which took up many hours of my time a few years ago when there was a shortage of comparative rental evidence and other methods had to be resorted to. The commissioners would be brought in only if a matter of principle arose.

I do not want to make too much of a textual point. If we are to consider the masterminding of the valuation exercise, and if directives will bring Scottish valuations into line with those in England, we need more explanation.

I do not intend to discuss forcefully the merits and demerits of the contractors principle—I have forgotten them—but I think that the merits are outweighed by the demerits. There are still differences in valuation law between Scotland and England. I approve of the Minister's talk of an attempt to harmonise valuation law. That talk was in connection with the business and commercial rating sectors, but I presume it has become relevant to the Government's unexpected, but sensible, decision to go for a property-based rating system and that harmonisation will take place in the domestic sector as well.

If harmonisation of valuation law is to be master-minded by the commissioners, the Minister should explain exactly what the phrase means. It does not mean that rateable values will be the same. They will not be the same in England where there are wide discrepancies, and presumably they will not be the same in Scotland.

Is the Minister saying that Armour on "Rating and Valuation" can be burned, that Scottish valuation law will come to an end on a phased basis and that, ultimately, valuation law in England and Scotland will be exactly the same and the law interpreted by Scottish courts will be the same as that interpreted by English courts? Is that the intention, and is that the remit of the commissioners of Inland Revenue?

Let us take a popular current example. I notice from the public prints that the Minister has written to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on the vexed question of the rating of football clubs. It has been suggested that something will be done that is totally unknown in Scottish law. Valuation law will move to a system which depends on revenue of the football clubs, and it will not be based on their grounds or the number who attend the premises. That will not be glad news for Rangers football club, but it will be extremely good for Cowdenbeath.

A revenue-based system is a departure in Scottish law. Recently, as reported in *The Glasgow Herald*, the Minister said:

"I should explain that should we decide to adopt such an approach, which would severely limit clubs' rights of appeal, we would regard this as an interim measure".

I am curious to know why it would severely restrict the clubs' rights of appeal. I invite the Minister to say a word in passing about that and the Government's intentions because of the interest in the subject and because it is important as an example of what the role of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue will be.

It will be a difficult relationship. I have said before that I welcome the Government's U-turn on the matter. The Secretary of State heavily briefed the press that the valuation office of the Inland Revenue will take over valuation procedures in Scotland, and the decision to reinstate the assessors strikes me as a sensible one. It is the essence of the assessors' role that although they are funded and have the wherewithal to operate through the regional councils, they are totally independent. If there is a dispute over valuation law, the answer in the courts will be that they are not controlled by anybody else. Now we are being asked to contemplate the possibility that, to some extent, they will be controlled by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

I hope that the Minister will give us a fuller explanation than was possible on Second Reading. I have no complaint about the answer then, because obviously it was a point for the Committee stage. As we have reached that stage, it would be helpful if the Minister gave a full explanation of the Government's intentions. We will then be able to judge whether we want to live with them.

Mr. Douglas: I understand that we shall have an extensive clause stand part debate, so I shall be brief. I am in the unaccustomed position of supporting the hon. Member for Glasgow, Gardscadden (Mr. Dewar). I shall

[Mr. Douglas]

also say something on behalf of local assessors and in view of the role that they play on the poll tax, that is an engaging anomaly.

I shall consider the relationship of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue to the assessors; this arose on Second Reading. I agree with the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Garscadden and I have tabled an amendment to this subsection to clarify the relationship. The hon. Member was right to say that we should congratulate the Government somewhat for their about-turn. In paragraph 2.29 of the consultative document, the Government said that the valuation office of the Inland Revenue would be almost in complete charge. It would almost totally operate the system.

I know that representations were made by the Scottish Assessors Association and the Government rightly conceded that the expertise of Scottish assessors should be used on the new council tax. I am concerned by what is embedded in the Bill—that the Commissioners of Inland Revenue will have effective legal control. I find that disturbing in the Scottish context.

I am not an expert—I am not a lawyer—and I have no great experience from direct discussions with assessors, but I understand that the Commissioners of Inland Revenue have no experience of valuing domestic property in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Douglas: The Minister may disagree, but I call in evidence Mr. Jack Woods, the president of the Scottish Assessors Association. If I am wrong I hope that the Minister will correct me.

6.30 pm

The commissioners have not embarked upon such an undertaking in Scotland. In certain areas of Scotland, there is no local office of Inland Revenue commissioners. It strikes me as strange that those with the authority and the expertise should be subordinate, in legal terms, to the Commissioners of Inland Revenue who lack that very experience and expertise.

I have tried to soften the effects of clause 3(2) by suggesting that, if the Government are intent on achieving harmony, the relationship between the commissioners and the assessors should, at the very most, be based on "guidance", not direction. It is important to decide who calls the shots and to recognise who has the expertise and experience to operate the proposed system in Scotland.

I am not in love with that system, but if the Government want to get it in place by 1 April 1993, they should be sensible. They should use the expertise of the assessors to the greatest extent and those assessors should not be impeded by being subject to the overlordship of the commissioners.

My argument may be subject to dispute, but given the practical experience of the assessors they should not be dominated by the commissioners. I appreciate that the Government see certain merits in fettering the assessors' role—that would not necessarily be to Scotland's advantage—and in trying to achieve harmony. Nevertheless, the assessors should not be dominated by directions issued by the commissioners.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) said, there is an unusual degree of unanimity between the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the prospective Scottish National party candidate for Garscadden.

This has been a genuinely useful debate and I hope that I can reassure the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Dunfermline, West. The hon. Member for Garscadden alleged that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had made a U-turn. The hon. Gentleman is a fair man and I am sure that he will recall that during questions on the original statement my right hon. Friend said to him:

"We are still considering the possible role of Scottish assessors in the system"—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1991; Vol. 189; c. 931.]

I fear that watching me on television is not a high priority for the hon. Member for Garscadden.

Mr. Dewar: It is always very instructive.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I recall that, on the evening following that statement, I appeared on television in "Scottish Questions". I made it clear that the assessors have the considerable expertise to which the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Dunfermline, west have referred. I stressed that we were seriously considering their role in the proposed system. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expressed the same view in interviews that he gave.

It is important to put on record the precise nature of the relationship between the assessors and the commissioners —it is the essence of the debate. The primary responsibility for carrying out valuations in Scotland rests with the assessors. They will act in accordance with directions given by the commissioners.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West spoke about the Inland Revenue valuation office's experience of domestic valuation in Scotland. The commissioners have had experience of valuing local authority houses for sale to sitting tenants and of valuing individual properties for taxation purposes. However, Mr. Woods was right to say that the commissioners do not have the same experience as the assessors when it comes to the general valuation procedure.

Mr. Douglas: So that I do not mislead the House I should like to quote what Mr. Woods said. I do not wish to misinterpret him. On page 321 of the submission to the Scottish office of May 1991, Mr. Woods said:

"The Valuation Office in Scotland has never in modern times been responsible for valuation for domestic rating as contrasted with the position in England and Wales"

Perhaps I misled the House with my extempore remarks, but it is important to quote the basis of my argument.

Mr. Stewart: I have that document with me, and I believe that Mr. Woods was right to say that the valuation office has never been involved in the general valuation procedure in Scotland. However, it has experience of valuing individual properties.

The Government are already on record as saying that we do not anticipate any need for the widespread use of the power to give directions set out in the Bill. We expect that power to be used initially to start the process going, but any further directions, should they be necessary, will simply be given in order to achieve consistency of approach.

We expect that the Inland Revenue commissioners would find it necessary to give a direction only as a last resort to achieve consistency in the way in which properties are banded in Scotland and consistency between Scotland and England and Wales, where that consistency would not otherwise be achieved in agreement with the local assessors.

There might not be any need to issue directions because the assessors and the Inland Revenue commissioners already have excellent working relationships. They should be able to deal with the problems of harmonisation in the non-domestic sector to which hon. Members have referred.

Mr. Douglas: They have not agreed on some issues for years.

Mr. Stewart: They have reached a measure of agreement in some areas. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to sports grounds, and I accept that they have not reached total agreement on that issue, which is a matter of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Even if the law is the same, professionals may disagree on how it should be applied in particular circumstances. That does not imply any criticism of their relative professionalism, expertise or dedication. We must ensure that we avoid such disagreement when we set up the council tax.

I hope that I can reassure the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Dunfermline, West by saying that the president of the Scottish Assessors Association has gone on record as saying that he feels comfortable about the role of the commissioners at the United Kingdom level. The proposals do not cause any problems to the professionals—those who will carry out the valuations.

I recognise that the amendments are probing and I assure the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Dunfermline, West that the power to give direction is simply one of last resort. I hope that it will not be necessary to use it once the process is up and running. I am sure that they would agree that it is crucial to give an assurance and perception of uniformity north and south of the border.

If any problems arise as a result of the Government's approach, I should be happy to discuss them with the hon. Members. We hope that that will not happen because the professionals are content with what has been suggested. I welcome the opportunity to put that on the record and I hope that I have been reasonably reassuring to the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Dunfermline, West.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister has been more reassuring than he sometimes is: I can be no more enthusiastic than that. In return, I can give him the assurance that I do not esxpect to spend many hours discussing valuation law with him. That would be a considerable test for both of us and I suspect that it would not produce much light.

I hear what the Minister says. It is significant that there have not been many protests from any of my contacts, so we shall have to see how it goes. I do not intend to force a Division. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourn9e): I beg to move amendment No. 52, in page 2, line 44, at end insert—

'(4A) The Commissioners of Inland Revenue in England and Wales and in Scotland, the local assessors acting under the direction of those commissioners, shall

(a) before commencing the work of valuation, and

(b) after completion of the work of valuation,

publish the expected and final cost of the valuation and compare it with the estimated cost of assessing individuals' tax status for the purpose of introducing a local income tax to fund local government.'.

The explanatory and financial memorandum refers to an estimated cost of £250 million for the valuation provisions. There are 21·5 million houses and flats in the country. A quick calculation shows that the Government expect the average valuation cost to be £12 per hereditament. That is an interesting figure. I should very much like the name and address of the estate agent that the Government intend to use if properties can be valued at £12 each. Perhaps nearer to the truth is what the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) said earlier in the debate. He said that he could sit in the centre of Southampton with a map of Southampton in his hands and identify upon it the bands of properties there. That would be socially divisive and would almost certainly lead to major protests and many appeals. It would also cost a great deal.

The purpose of the amendment is to seek answers from the Government about what their valuation proposals will mean and to try to identify the equivalent costs of introducing a local income tax. Either the Government must provide the full costs of valuation or they must give more information. The public needs to know how much money is to be wasted on introducing the new tax. I remind the Government that between £10 billion and £14 billion has already been wasted on the poll tax.

According to all the opinion polls, support for a local income tax is growing throughout the country. The costs of introducing a local income tax deserve to be considered. A local income tax would be simple to administer. It would certainly be fairer in terms of the burden placed on people. It would be very much related to ability to pay. Almost certainly it could be in place by April 1992—a very important date, since for 12 months after that date the Government propose to waste an additional £800 million, as the Audit Commission pointed out, on prolonging the agonies of the poll tax.

The reason why it would be simple to administer and could be in place so quickly is that the information that is needed is already on the Inland Revenue computers, which give the address, including the postal code, of everyone who would be required to pay the local income tax. That information, together with the correct software programme, means that it would be cheap to administer and that it would be in place within the right time scale. A local income tax has another attraction—accountability. An end-of-year adjustment, just before local elections, means that a local income tax would be seen by the electorate to be linked to the decision that they were about to take at the ballot box.

For those reasons, we believe that a local income tax is worthy of support. It was its unfairness in principle that was at the heart of the poll tax opposition. We are beginning to see, as the Government provide us with more details, how unfair their council tax proposals will be. The council tax will do nothing to help the student in a bed-sit, often living, traditionally, in the centre of our large cities and towns.

For example, a student in Edinburgh, even with a 25 per cent. discount, will still have to pay more under the council tax than he did under the poll tax. In central London, there is low-cost housing, provided by housing

[Mr. David Bellotti]

associations and others, next door to very expensive housing. The houses look the same from the outside. On the open market, those properties would fetch the same. However, the people living in the low-cost housing may be on very low incomes. The Government's council tax proposals do nothing to help students.

6.45 pm

A local income tax, related to ability to pay, means that the majority of students on low incomes would not contribute towards local taxation. Moreover, the council tax would do nothing for the widow in a terraced house, bought by the family 30 years ago in Southwark; the house may be valued at £90,000, but her income is about £8,000. Even after the single discount, that person would have to pay £372 a year. Under a local income tax system, she would be very much better off. The only important figure would be her £8,000 income. [AN HON. MEMBER: "What would she pay?"] The figure in Southwark will be well under £372. I do not have the exact figure, but I can make it available. The Government know full well that over a month ago the Liberal Democrats published and sent to the Government details of what the local income tax would be in every local authority in the country. As I say, I do not have the figure in front of me, but it is on public record. The Government have the figure, but I can make it available to them again, if they so wish. I am giving examples that the Government need to take on board if they intend to introduce a council tax, and I am certainly pressing for the introduction of the local income tax alternative.

A local income tax has many advantages. Not only is it fair, but it is directly linked to the ability of people to pay. They will pay what they can afford to pay. That is the important criterion when considering any form of local taxation. Our proposals also mean that no new registers and no new valuations would be required. It would be much cheaper to introduce, and it could be introduced very much more quickly than a council tax.

For those reasons, and also because I believe that the British people should have before them a comparison of the costs of the alternative ways in which local government could be funded, I must press the advantages of a local income tax. The valuation costs that appear in the explanatory and financial memorandum are not clear. Insufficient detail is provided for the people of this country to reach a decision. That detail should be given by Ministers. If they do not do so, I believe that a comparison should be placed before the people of this country.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I doubt whether we need spend much time on that weird flight of fancy. My question arises out of the failure of the Department of the Environment to reply to a letter that I wrote to it, which is relevant to this debate.

I, too, looked at the figure that is given in the explanatory and financial memorandum. Departments, under all Governments, respond much too slowly to queries. My question, arising out of the cost, is this: could it be that the low cost—which, on the face of it, looks like £12 per hereditament—is due to the Government's intention, perhaps under regulations, to make it possible for people who know that their properties are in the top band to respond to a letter by saying, "Yes, we are in the top band," thus doing away with the need to provide a valuation? No one will say that he or she is in the top band if that is not so. It would not be in anyone's interest to do that. That would provide the opportunity for considerable savings to be made. That may explain why one cannot make a naive division of the number of hereditaments into the total sum on the face of the Bill, as the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) has just tried to do.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The amendment provides for comparisons to be made between the cost of valuation and the cost of introducing a local income tax, and for figures to be published of the costs of valuation, both estimated —before it starts—and actual, after it has been completed. The amendment is unnecessary. Were the amendment simply what it appears to be, I should have been disappointed at the lack of knowledge that it displays about the way in which the Government treat public expenditure. However, its purpose is different. It has nothing to do with the merits of the Bill. It is intended to provide a platform for discussion of a local income tax.

I am disappointed, therefore, that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) was unable to give us details of what the Liberal Democrats propose. When he was challenged from a sedentary position as to what his friend in Southwark would be paying under the local income tax system, he said that the Liberal Democrats had published those figures but that they were not available to him to give to the Committee today.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I must tell the Minister that if the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) had sought to do as he suggests I might have been tempted to rule him out of order. The Minister should stick to what is in the amendment.

Mr. Bennett: I was drawing attention to the inconsistencies in the speech by the hon. Member for Eastbourne, Mr. Walker.

There are a number of reasons why a local income tax would be unsuitable for financing local government. Those reasons reflect matters of principle, practicality, and good administration.

It was interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Eastbourne, whose theory belongs in cloud cuckoo land; indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) talked about a flight of fancy. The hon. Member for Eastbourne cannot seriously believe that a local income tax could be in place by next year, that the software would be available and that the system would be simple. That is nonsense. None of it could be put into place by 1992 even if we believed in it in principle.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the average cost——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bennett: Not now. I am answering the hon. Member for Eastbourne, who asked about the average cost.

It may not be necessary for the valuer to value every home. Often a valuer will go to a street and find a whole street of identical properties. He will then be able to make the assumption that the value of such properties will be the same. The £12 that the hon. Member for Eastbourne calculates as the cost per property of valuation does not take account of the fact that, in some areas, valuers will be

able to make assessments on the basis of having seen rows of similar houses. The charge will be higher for properties requiring more detailed valuation. It is dangerous to make assumptions based on average figures.

There are important reasons of principle why we should not adopt a local income tax. I do not believe that a highly redistributive tax is a suitable basis for financing local government. Income tax is suitable only as a national tax, and it forms an important element in the Government's economic policy. To give local government the ability to levy income tax would reduce the Chancellor's room for manoeuvre in economic management. It would also reverse the reduction in the burden of taxation on incomes, which has been the Government's policy for 12 years, and would have a damaging effect on incentives. I cannot believe that the people of Britain would want there to be more than 500 chancellors of the exchequer, all dipping their hands into the public's pocket after the national Chancellor of the Exchequer had already done so.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: Let me finish my argument first.

I do not believe that it is right to give local government the right to redistribute income, and the unfettered discretion to take from local taxpayers sums of money in excess of what would be prudent. We have only to look at the effects of local government in London—at Lambeth, Haringey, Camden and other boroughs—to see what would happen to taxpayers in those areas if their local authorities had the right to dip into their pockets and impose a local income tax.

Mr. Salmond: I should like to come to the assistance of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti). The Government have been humiliated over the poll tax and are now embarking on a flight into the unknown with the new council tax. Does the Minister seriously intend to stand there and attempt to rubbish a system that works satisfactorily in so many other European countries?

Mr. Bennett: I am interested to hear from the representative of the Scottish National party that that party's policy is to have a local income tax. I do not believe that it would be right to have two forms of chancellor of the exchequer in this country—one in central Government, able to make decisions on the redistribution of income, and a mini-chancellor in every local authority, able to make his own decisions, which might be contrary to those made by central Government, about the distribution of wealth in the country.

I should not like a chancellor of the exchequer in Camden town hall to be able to levy as much as 25p on the local people, in addition to the 25 per cent. income tax already taken by central Government. I do not believe that most people want to see that, either. To go down that road would pose a serious danger to the Government's economic strategy. It would be irresponsible of the Government to allow fiscal policy to be under the influence of local authorities, with all the macro-economic consequences that could flow from such a state.

Income tax is not practical at local government level, for several reasons. The yield of income tax for small local authorities could vary considerably according to economic circumstances, and deny local government the steady and predictable source of income that they need. That lack of predictability, and the consequent potential instability, would be made worse by what experts call fiscal migration. That means that people with the highest incomes would move to low-tax authority areas and those with low incomes would move to high-tax areas.

Let us ponder the vicious spiral that that would cause —the instability in areas such as south London, where Lambeth and Wandsworth exist side by side. As every telling reminder of the difference between Labour and Conservative local government shows, at the moment Labour costs more; for example, it costs £450 more to live in Lambeth. If there were a local income tax, Labour would drive people out, and tax rates would become higher and higher as fewer people were left to pay the local income tax. Such a system of local taxation would not be common sense.

Another practical objection is that income tax rates are changed only in steps of 1p or, at a pinch, 0·5p. That would represent a large proportional increase in the tax rate and would greatly restrict local authorities' flexibility in making budget decisions. The smallest increase or decrease in income that they could consider might represent 10 or 20 per cent. of their total revenue. That does not seem likely to offer adequate accountability, and the buoyancy of the local income tax would reduce the restraints on local authority spending.

The Chairman: Order. The Minister is contrasting the cost of administering one system with the cost of administering another. His remarks do not seem to have much to do with the amendment. He should direct his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. Bennett: I thought that it was in order to point out what the effects of the amendment would be, Mr. Walker. It would produce a system of local income tax, and the disadvantages of that—

The Chairman: Order. I beg the Minister to read the amendment and then address his remarks to what I can read in it. I am not prepared to allow the debate on which the Minister is now embarking about the intrinsic merits of a local income tax scheme. The amendment is not about that, and nor is the debate.

Mr. Bennett: I think that I have already given enough evidence, Mr. Walker, to show the impracticality of the Liberal amendment, and the fact that it is wrong in principle. I therefore ask the Committee to vote against it.

Mr. Bellotti: I am grateful to you, Mr. Walker. I was beginning to struggle as I listened to the Minister's response. This is the first time that I have listened to a response from a Minister that I simply could not fathom. I hope that my reply will keep to the point.

First, there is the question of what the Government's valuation proposals will cost. The Minister's response has at least revealed that the Government will expect people undertaking valuations to stand at the end of a street and look down it to see whether all the houses look the same. If they do the houses will all be valued the same. That reveals a naivety beyond belief, even for the House.

Everyone realises that there has to be some element of fairness, and the Government's approach to valuation is ridiculous, as well as unfair.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Speaking as a chartered surveyor, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the procedure that he describes would be perfectly easy to carry out.

Mr. Bellotti: I am grateful for that advice, but in all the towns—and indeed, in all the roads—in which I have lived, there has been a vast variety of property values. There are differences in value of almost 100 per cent. between houses one end of the street where I live and houses at the other. A naivety about property valuation is being revealed among Conservative Members which I find surprising, especially in any one professionally involved with valuation. But at least we are getting some more information in the debate.

Having seen how ridiculous the Government's idea of the cost of valuation is, I want to emphasise how easy and cheap in comparison our alternative proposals would be. I invite the Minister to visit his local Inland Revenue office and ask the manager to press a button on the computer. Immediately, details of the names and addresses, including postcodes, of all the people in that area will flash before him on the screen. That is the basic information that we need to start with for the introduction of a local income tax. Given that the information already exists, the costs of levying a local income tax would be minimal.

7 pm

The Government's true feelings towards local authorities have been revealed at the Dispatch Box tonight. The measures in the Bill are all about controlling local authorities from the centre. If the Government want to make local authorities accountable, there are other measures open to them, one of which is the introduction of a fair voting system. But the Government want total control, and they are so naive as to believe that the valuation proposal can give it to them.

On the basis of the debate, I have no hesitation in pressing the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 26, Noes 274.

Division No. 168] **[7 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Douglas, Dick
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Livingstone, Ken
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Salmond, Alex
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Illsley, Eric
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus

Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Davis.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Gould: I beg to move amendment No. 54, in page 2, line 49, leave out 'prescribed' and insert 'fourteen'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 55, in page 2, line 49, at end insert

'Draft regulations under this section shall be laid before the House before 1st July 1991'.'.

No. 56, in page 2, line 49, at end insert

'and the top band shall contain only all houses with a value over £500,000 in England and Wales and all houses with a value over £330,000 in Scotland'.

Mr. Gould: The Bill and clause 3 are remarkably uninformative about the basis on which valuation is to be conducted. We know little about what will be measured. The Minister of State said that it was to be capital values —the sale price of one's house. On other occasions he has told a radio audience that other factors will also be taken into account. We are not clear about those factors and about how they impinge on the basic proposition that the valuation base should be capital values.

7.15 pm

Clause 3 tells us nothing about the number of bands, their disposition, size or relationship to each other. We are not told the top rate band. The only information vouchsafed to us is that the valuation will be based on prescribed bands. That basic proposition raises the issues that I have mentioned about the number of bands, their size and the top limit. It also raises the question of how the bands are to be calculated. Should they be calculated nationally or regionally or even more locally? Those matters will be raised in the debate on amendment No. 29. Conservative Members have voiced understandable concern about the difficulties that will arise if the bands apply nationally rather than regionally.

Another matter raised in the debate and outside is the likelihood of people appealing against a decision to put their properties in a particular band. Earlier, the Minister was asked to comment on the perception by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors that no appeals will be permitted. That must be a misapprehension. The Minister nods assent, confirming that it is. It would be extraordinary if no appeals were permitted.

We were told at the start of the whole operation that the shape and detail of the new council tax would be decided after consultation with local government and the wider public. The Government have published a consultation paper about which views are being expressed and submissions made. Understandably and rightly, the Government claim that consultation is valuable and say that they should be commended for inviting public opinion. They say that they should not simply impose solutions but should listen to the views of those who will be affected.

The mystery is that in this atmosphere of general bonhomie and a willingness to listen to other opinions, the issue of the bands, their number, their relationship to each other and the top limit have been arbitrarily withdrawn from the consultation process. One of the small services that the Minister could perform in replying to the debate is to confirm that that unhappy news is accurate. Perhaps he will explain why, on this most delicate of issues, the consultation of which the Government boast is not taking place.

Although the Bill is uninformative, the Government say that they have flatly and finally made up their minds that there will be seven bands and that the top one will consist of properties valued at £160,000 or above.

The Government have not been driven into this somewhat remarkable situation by any desire to achieve a sensible and practicable outcome. They have been driven by the hurried timetable that we debated earlier and the need, against all expectations, to convince people that somehow they can meet the schedule to replace the poll tax on 1 April 1993. That is why the Government have had to truncate the consultation process on this essential and central issue, and they have made up their minds quickly so that they can make rapid progress in what, I suspect, will be a vain attempt to stick to their timetable.

The Government are also driven by a motive that is even less reputable. Their desire is not just to fulfil a tight timetable, but to deflect criticism that they have been dithering, indecisive and unable to make up their mind. As soon as they came under pressure because they were thought to be consulting and looking at different options, they closed the whole issue and proclaimed that they had made up their mind and nothing would change it.

The Government felt desperately, their former Secretary of State and current chairman having been gobsmacked by our figures, that they had to produce figures of their own which at least gave the appearance of being as specific and reliable as ours. Therefore, it is worth recounting, as I have on previous occasions, the history of this short and somewhat shameful episode. The Secretary of State, who is again absent from our deliberations, had begun the process. Once he had made up his mind and persuaded colleagues to go for a property tax, against all earlier protestations from Ministers, he set about the business of trying to work out how it would operate.

First, the Secretary of State sent out a circular, in the last three or four days of February, asking district valuers to conduct an exercise in which they allocated all local property to one of 14 bands, with a top band for properties worth £250,000 or above. He did not ask them to conduct any valuations, because there was not enough time. No work was done on the ground. They were asked only to make guesses as to how many of the properties in their areas would go to one or other band. Armed with this rather scanty information, the Secretary of State took the figures to the Cabinet. It is significant that our amendment proposes the 14 bands that the Secretary of State's exercise had stipulated.

When the Secretary of State got to the Cabinet, by this time rather late in the day, he ran into a small difficulty called the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, having looked at the figures, said, "We cannot do this. We cannot threaten our supporters living in high value properties, particularly in the south of England, with an obligation to pay a substantial share of the new council tax. We have to limit that or we will be crucified electorally." To his credit, I think that the Secretary of State did not like that very much. He understood more clearly than the Prime Minister and his colleagues what the consequences would be, but he lost. He suffered another of his many significant defeats in trying to bring forward an acceptable replacement for the poll tax. I suspect that that is why the Secretary of State has found it difficult to appear in the Committee to support some of the proposals. He knows that the Bill represents a compendium of his defeats in Cabinet.

The Cabinet and the Prime Minister insisted that, instead of 14, there should be seven bands. In the meantime—here I cannot give as accurate an account as I would like as I am not privy to these matters—for reasons about which I can only speculate, the Secretary of State had decided that as 14 bands were not acceptable, he should go for a compromise of nine. Therefore, he instituted a further exercise. He issued another circular to the district valuers asking them to conduct a more comprehensive and serious exercise in which they allocated —on the basis, one assumes, of proper valuations—all properties to one of nine bands.

Rather unfortunately for the Secretary of State, the circular was leaked, and we discovered first that the nine band exercise was under way and subsequently that an earlier 14-band exercise had been carried out. Within a day of that leak, the nine-band exercise was aborted. We were then told that all bets were off and that there were to be seven bands because nothing else would do. That raises two questions: what was the purpose of the original 14-band exercise and why was the nine-band exercise begun and then aborted within a couple of days?

The answer is that by this stage the Government were so wounded by charges that they were dithering about replacing the poll tax and were so sensitive about charges that they could not make up their mind that, at the very suggestion that they were looking at a range of options, they felt obliged to kill the exercise. In the mistaken belief that panic represented decisiveness, they decided to go for seven bands and that was the end of the consultation process.

The peculiarity is that, because of the gobsmacking of the chairman of the Tory party, the Government were obliged to produce some figures. They could not produce the 14-band figures, which were in any case an estimate about which they wanted to forget. Nor could they produce the nine-band figures, which presumably at some stage they must have thought would be informative and useful but which they had been forced to abandon. Having nailed their colours to the seven-band mast, they had to produce figures for that. Unfortunately, no one had ever done any work on seven bands. Not to be deterred, they took the guesses that had formed the basis of the 14-band exercise, lopped off the top six bands, and rejuggled the remaining eight bands to create seven bands, none of which bore any accurate correlation to the original exercise. They then allocated guesses to each of the seven bands. On that basis, they had the gall to produce figures which they seriously said represented what bills would be for this year if their proposals were in operation. They are now using that ludicrous guess—worse, an invention based on a guess—to hold local authorities to levels of bills and expenditure for future years. That is a shameful and disreputable exercise.

The curious thing about this is that, when my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland to inquire what the basis of those figures might have been, he was told airily that it would not serve any purpose to reveal the statistical basis of the calculations. I can understand that, as we now know how insubstantial was the basis on which the figures were produced. I hope that the few hon. Members who are here in this relatively ill-attended debate and the, unfortunately, few who are recording it, will attempt to get across to the wider public that no reliance is to be placed on the Government's figures. The figures for bills to be paid under the council tax are inventions.

On an earlier occasion, when asked what had gone wrong with the poll tax, which no one defends, not even the Minister or the Under-Secretary—perhaps the right hon. Members for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) and for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) do—the Prime Minister said, "We were bounced." I wonder about a Prime Minister who can excuse one terrible mistake on that basis but is now proposing to bounce not just the Cabinet, his party or the House of Commons but the whole country into a council tax based on such a ludicrous invention. Has not the Prime Minister learnt the lesson of his analysis? We are storing up huge problems as a consequence of this insubstantial and shaky measure.

The Government cannot say that they were not warned. It is not just the Labour party which has said that the exercise looks unreliable and that banding is not to be supported without a good deal more work. Through its secretary general, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has expressed itself in today's newspapers as follows: unless the Government do a great deal more work and are not in too much of a rush to scrap the poll tax

without addressing some of the practical difficulties, the council tax will itself, like the poll tax, be a "discredited tax."

The Minister gave us a vignette of his relations with the RICS and, according to him, he met its representatives yesterday. He assures us that at that meeting they told him that the council tax was a wonderful concept. It is remarkable that after an hour or two in the presence of the Minister the secretary general of the RICS should say that the council tax threatens to be a "discredited tax". The Minister should think more carefully about the conversations that he has over lunch if that is an example of the impact that he has on his audiences.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman does not strengthen a weak case, which he has deployed repetitively, by misquoting what I said a few hours ago, which will appear clearly in *Hansard*.

Mr. Gould: I reported the Minister, as in turn reporting the RICS, as saying that the institution thought that the council tax would be a perfectly workable and acceptable tax. Is that the case?

Mr. Portillo: It will be workable and acceptable.

7.30 pm

Mr. Gould: I shall rephrase what I understood the RICS told us was the institution's view of the poll tax. It seems that the council tax is considered to be a workable and acceptable tax. However, even that is somewhat different from Mr. Pattison's reported remarks in the *Evening Standard*. It seems that he thinks that the council tax may become a "discredited tax". I take no responsibility for the reporting of his words, but it has been reported that he has said:

"banding allocations will become unrealistic and unfair."

It seems that he also said:

"This is the fast route to a discredited tax."

That is rather different from whatever words the Minister chooses to describe his interpretation of the RICS's views about the council tax.

The RICS has raised a number of practical problems with banding and I hope that the Minister will be able to respond to some of them. The Minister is on record as saying that, once properties are allocated to particular bands, they will remain in them in perpetuity. That has been contradicted by the RICS, which has said that efforts will have to be made periodically to ensure that the location of properties within certain bands is reviewed. One can understand that. I am glad that the Minister has confirmed that provision will be made for appeals.

The seven-band structure and the £160,000 cut-off point are unfair and arbitrary. The system has been designed for one reason and one only, and that is to protect the wealthy who are living in valuable properties so that they do not have to pay their fair share. That reproduces the fundamental unfairness and the rotten principle of the poll tax: that those best able to pay should not pay their fair contribution. The system distorts the progressiveness which, in other circumstances, the Government claim for council tenants. It seems that everyone will have to pay his fair share except for the wealthy who are in the most valuable properties.

However the liability is distributed for paying a fixed sum, the arithmetical mean must be the same. If one person paid the total liability of £9 billion, or whatever, the mean would be whatever it would be. The mean is distributed among all those who are liable. Ministers seem unable to grasp that if the Government protect those who are at the top end of the scale by saying that they need not pay their fair share, others have to pay that from which those at the top end of the scale have been absolved. While the arithmetical mean will always be the same, the bill for the average person, family or household—if the scale is compressed—must necessarily be higher.

I know that Ministers are not geniuses or even especially competent in arithmetic, but I am advancing a fairly basic proposition which I hope they will be able to grasp. I am saying that even under the council tax the bills of the majority will be higher than they need be because the range of bands is skewed to produce that result. Those who do not pay what they should place a loading on the rest of the community. That, to put it simply, is why the bills for the majority will be higher than they need be.

Incidentally, the compression of the bands and the imposition of the £160,000 limit lead to the concern that has been expressed by the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). He is rightly concerned about the impact of the compression on areas such as London and the south-east, where property values are so much higher than elsewhere. With proper banding the problem would have been eased.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Mr. Gould: Oh yes; oh yes; oh yes. The London Boroughs Association, the right hon. Member for Brent, North and the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) have argued that a proper range of valuation would have reduced the deleterious effect of high property values in London and the south-east.

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman has slightly misunderstood what my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and I said. We argued that in many London boroughs there are no properties with a value of £60,000 or £80,000. We agree with the sevenband structure but we say that it needs to be set out differently according to the region. The London Boroughs Association has advanced the same argument.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, and I agree with it. He may be caused embarrassment when I say that we are in entire agreement and on all fours in this instance. I agree that a separate argument can be advanced about the number of bands in the structure. I understand him to say that as the range of property values in London is rather different from that in the rest of the country, it is inappropriate to have an already compressed range of bands applying to London. I say that, if we had the 14 bands that the Secretary of State originally contemplated, with a limit of £500,000, the London boroughs, depending on their individual circumstances, could have applied the appropriate bands to their range of properties. I think that the hon. Gentleman understands my argument.

Mr. Portillo: I genuinely wonder whether the hon. Gentleman does not understand or whether he expresses himself poorly. Whatever the reason, his argument about compressed bands is 100 per cent. wrong. It is rather reminiscent of the point about parishes that arose yesterday. He understood that there was a point, but he had it entirely wrong. If a property is worth £160,000 in

[Mr. Portillo]

London, under our proposal it will pay two-and-a-half times as much as, for example, a £30,000 property. If we did not have compression, the property worth £160,000 would pay five times as much as the other property, or rather more. Clearly compression is helpful to the higher-value properties in the south-east, not unhelpful.

Mr. Gould: The Minister fails to understand the effect of his own scheme. As many properties in London are valued at about £160,000, and as that is the top rate, they all pay the top rate. The result is that there are few to pay anything less. Those who live in houses that are worth £500,000 pay no more. In other words, those who are bunched in the middle of the valuation range pay the top rate under the Minister's scheme. That is why the right hon. Member for Brent, North and the hon. Member for Surbiton are objecting. They say that an inappropriate range of property values is being applied. I am surprised that the Minister cannot understand that. Again, we have an insight into why mistakes are made.

The Chairman: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member in the middle of his speech, but I must remind him and the Minister that we are trespassing into an area that will be covered during the next debate, which will focus on regionalisation.

Mr. Gould: You are right, Mr. Walker. We have had debates, however, about regional banding under even less appropriate amendments.

I am about to draw my remarks to a close and I shall conclude by saying that however the Minister may wish to interpret the RICS's warnings, there are many outside this place who understand very well that what is being proposed by way of banding is a fast route, as the RICS has said, to a "discredited tax".

The amendment offers the Government a means of making honest men of themselves. The only exercise that they have carried out is a 14-band exercise, as stipulated in the amendment. The Government can now use the only information that they have to instruct district valuers and others on how to make progress. However, unless they are prepared to do that, they must stand convicted of putting forward proposals and figures to the public for which they have absolutely no basis. As long as they adhere to their current position, which is that consultation is at an end and an unfair and unworkable banding system is to be imposed, we are on the way to that discredited tax.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister of State responds to the debate, he will explain the present state of play with regard to banding and will say whether the paper before us is a consultation paper. Following my letter to him, he will know that I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the top band. Many properties in my constituency and throughout suburban and inner London, including my hon. Friend's constituency, are valued by local estate agents at £160,000 or more. Many are ordinary, semi-detached properties and my constituents who live in those properties feel strongly that they will be put into exactly the same band as owners of property worth the £0·5 million mentioned in the amendment, and even more. There may be a relatively small number of higher-priced properties and, even if there were another band, it might not make much difference. Nevertheless, there is an understandable sense of unfairness.

I have put the point in writing and verbally to my hon. Friend. Although I do not expect him to commit himself this evening, the matter could be dealt with in various ways, such as by having eight, nine or 14 bands, a regional banding system or simply altering the figures covered by the proposed seven bands. I merely ask for an assurance that the bands proposed by the Government are not cast in concrete and that the representations that have been made to my hon. Friend—the end of the consultation is in a couple of days' time—will be taken into account. Will my hon. Friend assure me that, by passing clause 3, we shall not commit ourselves irrevocably to the seven bands and the figures that have been given?

I have been in the House long enough to know the interaction between legislation. We shall eventually have legislation that contains detailed proposals of the council tax. I do not want to be told then that there will be seven bands at those values because I supported them in the earlier legislation. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will assure me that no final decision has been made on the number of bands or the figures within them.

Mr. Portillo: If my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) votes in favour of the clause, he will be voting to authorise Parliament to make money available for a valuation process, which would put properties into bands. But he would not be voting for a particular number of bands or series of values to be ascribed to bands. The banding concept is implicit within the Bill but no number of bands is stipulated.

I have told my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst in private, and I do so equally in public, that we entered the consultation process with a firm recommendation from the Government that there should be seven bands, and we indicated the valuation that we had in mind having thought about the matter carefully. I do not wish to deceive my hon. Friend in that respect, because the proposal for seven bands is firm. However, this is a genuine consultation period and we fully recognise that we shall hear a range of comments and opinions. We shall wish to weigh all the points made to us during that period. I thank my hon. Friend for being so assiduous in writing and speaking to me and raising the matter during the Committee proceedings.

7.45 pm

One of our reasons for considering that a cut-off point at, say, £160,000 may be appropriate is that, in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst some people live in even more expensive houses. It does not mean that they have the readily disposable income to make a much greater contribution. They may simply have lived in such a house for some time and now find that it is worth a great deal of money because of where it is. One of the great mistakes made during the rating system was the assumption that, if one lived in a more valuable property, one should contribute limitless extra amounts to local government.

We have sought, first, to constrain the amount that anyone contributes by changing the balance of what is raised nationally and what is raised locally. Secondly, we have sought to ensure that, although the tax will be related to property prices, that relationship should be kept within

bounds, so that those who live in more expensive properties should contribute only about two thirds more than those in average value properties, while those in the least valuable properties should contribute only two thirds of the average.

That is why it is extraordinary that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) should so clearly misunderstand the point as it applies to London and the south-east. When he appeared to sympathise with my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) who spoke about the difficulties of operating within a national banding system, it was the merest cant. The Labour party's proposal would exacerbate those difficulties manyfold. Opposition Members want a system in which there are no restraints. They assume that an elderly couple who live in a house that now happens to be worth £250,000 are, ipso facto, five times more able to pay tax than people living in houses worth £50,000 in other parts of the country. Although the Government believe that the council tax should relate partly to property prices, we do not believe that there should be the crude relationship that existed under the rating system, to which the Labour party wish to return.

Mr. Gould: I suspect that we shall have an opportunity to debate our proposals for fair rates when there is a Labour Government after the next general election. I am sure that the Minister is aware that we are currently debating an amendment on a rather different proposition, which is that there should be 14 bands with a £0·5 million top band rather than the Government's current proposal. Will the Minister deal with that distinction?

Mr. Portillo: Yes, and I can be brief because the hon. Gentleman's speech has been delivered before. Indeed, we have heard every word of it before. His fictitious account of how the Government moved from 14 bands to some other number of bands——

Mr. Gould: As the Minister accuses me of returning to the theme more than once, perhaps we can now deal with it. What valuation exercises have been carried out and on the basis of how many bands? Am I right to say that a 14-band exercise was carried out, a nine-band exercise was aborted and a seven-band exercise has not yet been completed?

Mr. Portillo: I fell foul of the "lady Whip" earlier by going on too long and I do not intend to be drawn into all that. But for the avoidance of doubt I can tell the hon. Gentleman that at no time did Ministers consider a 14-band option, and the reason for that is apparent. The great advantage of banding——

Mr. Blunkett: I will take responsibility for keeping the debate going. What was circular 53 all about then?

Mr. Portillo: It was not about the series of options that Ministers were to consider. That is the important point.

The obvious merit of banding is that it simplifies the process of valuing property and it also simplifies the question of what happens over time. Clearly, the fewer the number of bands, the fewer difficulties there are over time. The fewer appeals there are in the first place because there are fewer boundaries between bands the less likelihood there is that over time a property will move from one band to another. It would have been absurd for Ministers to consider a 14-band option and that is why it is absurd that it should have been proposed in the amendment. If there is to be an effective banding system, the pressure is to have a small number of bands rather than a large number of bands.

That is the point that I was trying to make when I talked about revaluation. A terraced house is a terraced is a terraced house. It never ceases to be that, and it never changes its location. If the bands are broad enough, even over a period of time it is unlikely that its value, or even its relative value, will move to such an extent that it will change bands. I do not exclude the possibility, but that is the point that I was trying to make about the advantage of banding. The Labour party's rates proposal would mean that each property would have to be revalued periodically and their values would all have to change.

There is one other point that I want to pick up because the hon. Member for Dagenham has raised it so often—what I said on the radio about other factors. I can give a simple example. Factors other than capital value could be taken into account. For example, improvements to a property for the benefit of a disabled person were disregarded for the purposes of rateable value, and rightly so, and under the council tax they should also be disregarded. That is the sort of other factor that I have in mind and I was trying to be fairly exact about that. It is an important point and the Secretary of State has never denied it.

Mr. O'Brien: What happens to the disabled person whose property is in the lowest band? Will there be any concession for that individual?

Mr. Portillo: If the hon. Gentleman would like to write to me with some proposals, I shall weigh them in the consultation process.

Mr. O'Brien: The answer is no.

Mr. Portillo: No, that is precisely the sort of thing that we want to talk about during the consultation process. We will be considering how to treat the properties of disabled people.

Mr. O'Brien: There will be no concession.

Mr. Portillo: Please, I ask the hon. Gentleman to listen. I am saying that the Government will want to listen carefully to what is said about such matters during the consultation. I believe that the council tax should disregard improvements to, for instance, the properties of disabled people.

The hon. Member for Dagenham is apparently also puzzled about how the valuation office has data about the value of properties. When properties in Britain are sold, stamp duty may have to be paid and that is a matter for the Inland Revenue. The Inland Revenue has a great deal of information about current house prices because people selling them have to declare the prices at which they sell them and they have to pay tax.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors. He does himself no good by misquoting. The *Evening Standard* says that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' secretary general, Mr. Michael Pattison, said:

"there should be periodic checks on whether properties are still in the right band. Otherwise . . . over several years 'banding allocations will become unrealistic and unfair. That is the fast route to a discredited tax'."

[Mr. Portillo]

The hon. Gentleman implied that the RICS has said that banding was the way to an unworkable and discredited tax and that is not true. The RICS is making the point that it wants to see revaluations and appeals. We have always made it clear that we think that there should be an appeal mechanism and I believe that that is implied in paragraph 2.23 of our consultation document.

The Opposition have no doubt amused themselves by putting down an amendment proposing 14 bands, but it makes no sense and it never would have made any sense. It was never considered by the Government, and there is no reason to revisit that terrain. I therefore call upon the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Gould: Just as the Minister claims not to have been surprised at me moving the amendment, I am unfortunately not surprised at his response to my speech and to the amendment. He notably failed to provide any evidence that the Government had any basis for their calculations. He notably failed to satisfy the proper inquiries from his own hon. Friends and he will notably have failed to have saved his colleagues, should they ever be members of the Government who implement the tax, from the sort of embarrassment which scarred them so deeply over the poll tax. For all those reasons, we wish to press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 186, Noes 260.

Division No. 169] **[7.55 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'lord)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. O'Brien: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 2, line 49, at end insert

'and (in the case of England and Wales) according to regions, in respect of each of which the Secretary of State shall prescribe a band of values'.

The amendment permits a debate on the regional variations of capital values and their effects on the system proposed for the new council tax.

During the debate on the first set of amendments, the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) mentioned the great concern of many people in London and the south about the way in which the proposed banding system will apply in their areas. He told the Minister that, if some provision could be made to accommodate the suggestions made by the London Boroughs Association, and if some amendments were made to the system, he envisaged people dancing in the streets and voices in heaven blessing the Minister, because problems are expected with the banding system in its present form.

During the debate on the previous set of amendments, my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) dwelt at some length on the banding issue. This amendment refers to the specific problem of how the various bands will apply in certain areas and reflects the fact that proposals have been made for some regional banding. We have tabled the amendment against that background in the hope that the Government will reconsider the present principle of banding and will try to accommodate some of the worries expressed by the LBA and by Conservative Members about the problems facing ratepayers in southern England.

The Bill is an enabling measure; it provides the power to allocate domestic properties to bands for rating purposes. It is a power to prescribe principles for banding in the form of regulations. Regulations will also be made to provide access to the necessary information to ensure that such allocations are made on a sound basis. That is the background to the problems mentioned by London and southern Members of Parliament.

[Mr. O'Brien]

The Bill is a Government U-turn on the poll tax, which has been discredited and is to be scrapped. Our fear is that, if the proposed new banding system is not amended, the new council tax will also be discredited. It is not only Labour Members who are saying that. The Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association has been putting pressure on some 200 Members of Parliament, mostly Conservative, to urge the Government to base the new council tax on regional bands that take account of the higher property values in the south. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham mentioned the original proposal for 14 bands, which would have met some of the anxieties expressed by the LBA.

The LBA has made overtures to Members of Parliament because householders in regions with high property values, such as the south-east and the south-west, would benefit from an amendment to the banding proposals. The LBA suggests that there should be nine regions, with the system being based on the average house price in each region. Those nine regions would be the north, the north-west, Mersey and Humberside, the west midlands, the east midlands, East Anglia, the south-west, the south-east, and Greater London. The Government should carefully consider that proposal as it would mean a fairer and more equal system for the banding of properties. Although I do not wholly support the LBA's proposals, I support the proposal for a regional emphasis.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend's point is reinforced by the position in my constituency, where well over half of the properties would come within the bottom range of the proposed bands. However, if those properties were in high-value areas such as London and the south-east, they would come within the top range. That shows the wide regional variations.

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend has ably explained the problem. Without some sort of regional banding, the proposed system will be discredited, as was the poll tax. That is why we take the matter very seriously.

8.15 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend, and I can tell him that the people of Tower Hamlets are very concerned. In docklands, small luxury apartments sell for about £250,000, yet most people in that borough have modest incomes and live in modest dwellings. Some people are very poor and they live in overcrowded accommodation. They do not want to pay a high council tax for the privilege of living in an area where luxury apartments are bought by companies and given to their executives as pied-a-terres.

Mr. O'Brien: The problem explained by my hon. Friend is common to many London boroughs and to the south-east and south-west. I am sure that many Members of Parliament could cite similar cases. For example, it is absurd that 70 per cent. of the homes in Hackney, which is one of London's most deprived boroughs, will come within the top three tax bands. The poor people of Hackney will be paying a high council tax because under the Government's grant system their area is deemed to be wealthy. Those poor people often live in homes that they rent from the council or from a housing association; they cannot afford to buy homes in such a high-cost area. The proposed council tax has many anomalies, and if the Government do not deal with them there will be another uprising.

Clause 3(3) provides:

"The valuation shall be carried out on such assumptions and in accordance with such principles and by reference to such date as may be prescribed".

In many cases, that will be at the discretion of the Secretary of State. The Bill gives him the power to carry out such prescription. The clause also refers to "each prescribed area". The Government must deal with such prescribed areas because the Members of Parliament representing them place great importance on how the council tax will be applied to them.

At first glance clause 3(3) appears to cover all the issues of concern and matters of principle raised by hon. Members on both sides, but in different parts of the country each prescribed area could be different. Therefore, it is important that the Government note the proposals in our amendment for regional variations in the capital values of domestic properties.

Hon. Members will be aware that a few years ago, when we received the report on the revaluation of commercial properties, we realised the significance of the regional variations of property values. That could cause an uproar and create problems. One can readily see that the same problems will recur with this proposed banding of properties. Those are warnings to the Government that something must be done if the council tax is to be fair. Our amendment attempts to rectify the problems and any anomalies which may arise from this ill-thought-out legislation.

The Secretary of State for the Environment told us that the new council tax would be based solely on capital values, but the Minister of State said that many other factors would be considered when assessing capital values, and he referred to the disabled. If disability is the only other factor, the Minister was misleading the listeners who tuned in to the "Today" programme. We should have a further explanation of the Government's proposals.

When the Secretary of State was challenged in the House about those conflicting views, he said that both he and the Minister were correct. That cannot be the case. As their comments conflicted, they cannot both be correct in their views on how the council tax will be applied. The Bill does nothing to clarify that. I hope that tonight the Minister will clarify the issue.

The consultation paper on local government finance confuses the uses of values. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham explained in detail the confusion caused by the various values applied to the bands. The proposals use values for the distribution of the local tax burden within each prescribed area and valuations to determine in part the resources equalisation function grant. The proposals for banding influence the grant that the Government will pay on resources equalisation. Therefore, if the valuations system and banding are not thought through properly, they will create difficulties and unfairness in the financing of local authority areas. In addition to demanding payment from people on low incomes, they will influence the amount of grant paid to local authorities under the rate support element.

The prescribed area and the valuation base should be examined because of the high capital values and the high incidence of rented accommodation. If that is not done, there should be an examination of regional banding.

I referred to the payment of grant support. On Second Reading, in reply to an intervention by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on the complete abolition of grants, the Secretary of State said:

"My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion. However, if one were to examine the resources of some of the more hard-pressed authorities and their undeniable needs, it would be difficult to see how to square 100 per cent. of expenditure with 100 per cent. of local revenue. The Government take the view that there is a balance to be struck. We have changed the incidence of the balance very much for the better through my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget, but it is very much the Government's view that it is appropriate that local authorities should have some revenue-raising capacity of their own."—[*Offical Report*, 3 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 56.]

In other words, if local authority revenue is to be raised fairly, it is important that the Government consider regional banding, as outlined in the amendment. In areas such as Hackney, the measure of real taxable resources, such as taxable incomes, should be taken as the formula for considering the resources equalisation function of the grant system rather than the artificially high prices of properties.

We can appreciate the reintroduction of the resources equalisation grant procedure—that is a step in the right direction—but if it is to apply fairly across the board, the measure of taxable capacity should be incomes. That is to say, it should apply to people and not to houses because people pay taxes and houses do not. The principle applied in the banding procedure is wholly unfair.

If the new council tax is to apply fairly across the board, a more accurate view must be taken of standard spending assessments. They influence all the budget proposals of local authorities. In many instances the SSA will determine the grant to be paid to an authority and how much taxpayers will pay. We already realise that the SSA is the criterion for capping. Therefore, there must be a radical review of SSAs before the new council tax is introduced.

I warn the Government that, if this banding exercise is their flagship for financing local authority expenditure, and if it is to be applied fairly, at present its application is not in the best interests of local government. I ask the Minister to consider our amendment carefully. If there are difficulties with it, perhaps he will explain what the Government are prepared to accept to deal with the anxieties expressed in this debate. If there is no alternative to the system of banding, we shall have to divide the House on this issue.

8.30 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I urge the Government to reject this amendment. It might appear slightly attractive superficially; certainly the principle of regional variations has already been granted, in the sense that there will be a different banding base for Wales, Scotland and England. This is a mischief-making amendment, however. The Opposition have not described what they have in mind as an alternative. When they were given the opportunity to participate in the construction of an alternative to the community charge, they declined it. The Liberals, on the other hand, at least had the good grace to make a contribution and to suggest a scheme which, on examination, has been rejected in the past and which is likely to be rejected again—as it is wholly impractical.

Mr. O'Brien: I must correct the hon. Gentleman. The Labour party did not decline to participate. We asked the Secretary of State to abolish the poll tax immediately, whereupon we would enter into meaningful consultations.

Mr. Allason: There can be no consultations if prior conditions are imposed.

The real tragedy of all this is to be found in what the Opposition say about the best interests of local government. Those best interests are that both sides should be able to sit down and thrash out a system that can be worked by both parties. Different parties are in power across the country and they will have to implement and administer the system. Here we can see the mischief making at work in the amendment. The Opposition are trying to tie the Government's hands. As I read clause 3(3), the Government have wide powers of discretion to decide how the bands will work, yet the Opposition are attempting to introduce a system based on regional variations.

In my constituency there are many variations. We have houses of high value and a large number of small terraced houses which used to have low rateable values. My interest in this topic stemmed from the fact that Torbay had the dubious honour of having to impose the highest community charge in the south-west. My support for the community charge fell away between the moment when the original scheme looked as if it were going to benefit Torbay and the moment when the new SSA system, introduced in November 1989, severely disadvantaged my constituency.

I hope that the new system will at least be fair and that it will take account of some element of regional variation. But to try to tie the Government's hands in an enabling Bill is sheer mischief making. I hope that, in the months before the election, the electorate will remember how the Opposition behaved on this important issue.

The system of raising revenue for local authorities will have to be administered by all parties. There is a Liberal administration in my constituency, so it is essential for local government and for those who have to pay the council tax that there be an element of agreement. Accordingly, I urge the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Key: I shall do my best not to inflame any hon. Member on this issue, in the interests of brevity. I shall, of course, respond seriously to the points that have been made.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) for his wise words. He has put his finger on two of the problems: mischief-making and the genuine regional problem. I listened with care to the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon). It was significant that they put arguments from the point of view of different ends of the country. They put their fingers on the central problem in all this. It is the practical problem of regional boundaries—similar houses with similar values on either side of a regional boundary could attract very different council tax bills.

In my constituency, for instance, a house might fall into band E or F, while over the boundary in the next village in Hampshire, a similar house might fall into band C because it is in the south-east region. Why should two

[Mr. Key]

similar houses of the same value and so close together have such different bills? That is one of the biggest problems associated with regional banding.

I shall take away the thesis of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and consider it carefully. He need not divide the House on this issue, however, because the amendment is unnecessary.

This is an enabling power which does not specify how bands should be set. Indeed, it would be possible to have regional bands under the Bill. The Government have no proposals to have such regional bands but the amendment is redundant and merely designed to limit the room for manoeuvre, not to increase the possibilities.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): The Minister talked about how, with regional banding, a property in his constituency could pay more council tax than one across the boundary in a neighbouring constituency. Does not the same problem occur between the high values of properties in the south compared with the values of properties in the north? Semi-detached houses in my constituency would be far cheaper than their counterparts in the south.

Mr. Key: I was coming to that, but it happens to be untrue. A valuation carried out differentially according to regions would mean that low-value properties in the north of England would face bills similar to those of much higher-valued properties in the south. The effect of the amendment would be to raise council tax bills for most people living outside the south-east of England. That would not be right. On our proposals, bills would be set on the same basis throughout England. Properties with values of about £80,000 would be charged on the same basis in London and Lancashire, in Newcastle and in Nuneaton. This simple and readily understood principle would disappear if separate bands were set for each region.

I know that some of my hon. Friends have said that our approach would give rise to unduly high bills in the south-east. We have designed our proposals to ensure as far as we can that that does not happen. Our approach to banding properties means that the largest bill is only two and a half times the lowest, for spending at the standard level. That will avoid disproportionate bills for high-priced areas and will mean that low bills for low-priced properties are sent out throughout the country. The amendment seeks to undermine that approach and I call on the Committee to reject it.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister has missed an important point. He says that people in the highest band will pay two and a half times the tax of people in the lowest. But it is the number of people in the higher bands that gives rise to our anxiety. We are worried about the numbers who will be paying excessive levels of the tax.

The Minister said that the Government had no intention of introducing any form of regional banding. I did not suggest that a regional banding procedure should be set in concrete. The amendment requires the Government to establish a form of regional banding to ensure fairness throughout the country in the levying of taxes on people in low value properties.

As the Minister can give us no guidance and no assurance has been given that a fair system will be applied, we have no alternative but to divide the Committee.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 184, Noes 259.

Division No. 170] **[8.40 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex

Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I beg to move amendment No. 30, in page 3, leave out lines 1 to 14.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 31, in page 3, line 2, leave out 'persons' and insert

'members of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors or members of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation'.

Mr. Murphy: Amendment No. 30 concerns keeping valuation exercises in the hands of the valuation sector of the Inland Revenue and amendment No. 31, having properly qualified valuers if privatisation of that service takes place.

Opposition Members have nothing against estate agents, either in particular or in general. In some respects, we are rather sorry for them. Because of the high interest rates that the Government have imposed recently they are disappearing at a fairly rapid pace. Nevertheless, I suspect that they will be the most significant beneficiaries of the council tax during the next couple of years because, according to the Bill, the Government intend to put a considerable amount of work their way to speed up the valuation of domestic properties in England and Wales and thus ensure that the council tax is introduced as quickly as the Government suggest—that is, in 1993.

I mentioned yesterday and I think that it is worth repeating that in Wales—I am sure that this also applies to England and Scotland—the district councils are saying that, as regards administering the implementation of the new tax, 1994 is a more realistic date for its introduction. Whether it is 1993 or 1994, if we give estate agents and private surveyors the job of evaluating property, many people will express a number of fears.

In the first instance, it could be argued that estate agents and surveyors have a vested interest in pushing up prices and valuations of properties. When houses are sold, it is on the basis of a commission and obviously estate agents will benefit if houses are more expensive when they are sold. It has been argued that the associations which represent estate agents and surveyors could impose voluntary restraints. However, only a year or so ago hon. Members on both sides of the Committee realised, when we were considering the difficult problem of gazumping in England and Wales, that voluntary restraints on estate agents simply were not good enough. There is an opportunity for unscrupulous estate agents and surveyors to puff up the price of properties in their areas for their own advantage.

The other problem is that private sector valuers could deal with both the initial valuation of a property and the appeal on valuation, in their area. Clearly that goes against natural justice, and it would not be a good case for the Government to argue.

However, that is not the biggest problem, which is one of confidence. For many years I was a member of the ratings and valuation courts in south Wales. We had to deal with members of the general public, who had appealed to the panels against the valuation of their property. Very often the people who were appealing were heartily fed up with the activities of the Inland Revenue and its valuation sector. However, that did not happen often. In general, Inland Revenue valuation officers did a good job, but, clearly, if valuation is to be put into the hands of estate agents people's confidence in the assessments made by them of properties will be considerably less than if the Inland Revenue made the valuations.

Mr. Allason: Bearing in mind the fact that the Labour party's policy is for four, five or even six valuations of properties for its property tax, will the hon. Gentleman give a commitment on behalf of the Labour party that only Inland Revenue valuation officers and members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors will be employed to undertake that work?

Mr. Murphy: It is not for me to give such a commitment in a debate that relates to a small section of the Bill. However, the Inland Revenue would be the appropriate body to deal with valuations as they affect rates. It has always done a good job and I see no reason why it should not continue to do its job after a Labour Government are elected and revaluation takes place two or three years after the introduction of a fair rates system.

Mr. Allason: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point. The heart of the Labour party's policy is that it is not one of revaluation across the whole country, but a series of valuations based on different criteria for each property. The policy will keep valuation officers and members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in business for the next two decades.

Mr. Murphy: That is not the case. Members of the Inland Revenue valuation sector are extremely competent, capable and highly qualified and are more than adequately suited to deal with all the different methods by which property would be valued. In fact, the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation has said that its members could quite adequately and properly deal with the matter. I have not the slightest doubt that the professional competence of the people who would be involved in valuation could cope with the new methods, as it coped with those in the past. If they could cope with notional rental valuations, they could certainly cope with the simpler ones on capital value that we shall introduce. I have no doubts about that.

9 pm

The confidence that the general public will have in the people valuing their properties will be greater if the people doing that are those from the Inland Revenue who used to do it rather than estates agents. I am told that estate agents are held in the same regard as Members of Parliament and we must read into that what we will.

The Government need to have a close examination of the cost of the exercise. Some have suggested that it could cost about £250 million. Most significantly, we would have to compare that with the costs of using the local valuation officers of the Inland Revenue. Amendment No. 31 deals with the case, if the Government do not see fit to accept amendment No. 30. If the Government insist on using estate agents and surveyors, they should consider whether they have the necessary qualifications; they should be members of either the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors or of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation.

The essence of the debate is that there is no need for the proposals in the first place. The Government are panicking because they want to get the legislation through as quickly as possible to ensure that the council tax is in operation by 1993. That is, of course, a fiction because by then there will be a Labour Government.

In any event, our view is that the 1973 valuations are sufficient in the first instance to introduce a fair rating

system. A couple of years after its introduction, it will be operated on a rolling basis. It is important that there should be time for proper valuation with high public confidence in the valuers. We believe that estate agents and surveyors, whatever their qualities, are not in the same league as the Inland Revenue and that valuation should be the subject of a Government Department and not private individuals or firms.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The amendments have two aims. The first is to prevent the commissioners of the Inland Revenue from appointing persons who are not in the service of the Crown to assist them in the valuation. Secondly, they insist that anybody who can help with the valuation is a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors or of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation.

I found it difficult to understand the argument of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). Throughout the debate, we have heard the Labour Members complaining about the speed with which the Bill will go through the House and the time that it will take to put it into practice. We have been told that the Labour party is worried that the proposals will not be in place by 1 April 1993, but that it will be 1 April 1994. The Labour party has urged that we should return to the old rating system, a system which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said was

"an irrational, inefficient, highly resented form of taxation".

It is strange that the Labour party should take that view and complain about speed—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) wish to intervene?

Mr. Dewar: No, I do not.

Mr. Bennett: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will keep quiet if he does not wish to contribute to the debate.

The advantage of using the private sector as well as the Inland Revenue is, I should have thought, quite clear. First, it gives diversity and choice and ensures that there is not just one sector giving valuations. The complaint of the hon. Member for Torfaen that our proposal would mean estate agents bidding up the value of properties is false on two counts. First, comparisons will be made with the valuations made by other bodies. That is the advantage of involving both the public and the private sector. Secondly, there will be the public perception. I cannot believe for one moment that if an estate agent were to bid up the value of the properties in his area the people who lived in them would not complain, if they thought that they would have to pay more council tax than would otherwise have been the case. The hon. Gentleman put forward a spurious and weak argument. Therefore, we cannot accept the amendments.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House on Second Reading that the Government intend to use the best professional expertise to undertake the work involved in allocating properties to bands. We shall use the private sector when it can use its skills to do a speedy and cost-effective job.

The second of the two amendments contradicts the first. It says that the private sector can be used but that we must ensure that the only people who do the work are members of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors or the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation. We are determined to use the best professional expertise that is available to allocate properties to bands in the most cost-effective way and in a way that will deliver the introduction of the council tax in April 1993. Naturally we shall consider the role of members of both the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation. It cannot, however, be right for us blindly to rule out people who are not members of those bodies when we consider who can assist us in this task. What I can do, however, is rule out people who do not have the appropriate expertise to undertake a sound and cost-effective job.

There is a variety of jobs to be done. We shall consider all offers of assistance and will decide on the most cost-effective use of all the resources available to us. I cannot, therefore, recommend the Committee to accept the two amendments of the hon. Member for Torfaen.

Mr. Murphy: The Minister misunderstood what I said about the second amendment. I said clearly that if the first amendment was not accepted by the Committee, the second could be considered in a separate context. All of us are concerned about the cost-effectiveness of how property is valued, but that cannot be the main criterion when we are considering a brand new tax.

The problem with the poll tax was that it never gained the confidence of the public. If the Government want the new council tax to gain the confidence of the public but the valuation of properties and the setting up of the bands is flawed—because the work has not been done properly, due to the fact that those who carry out the valuations do not enjoy the confidence of the people of Britain—it is doomed from the very beginning. That is why the amendments have been tabled. We want to ensure that people do not do what they used to do when I sat on those bodies—come to us because of their lack of confidence in the valuation of their properties.

The amendments are important. I hope that the Government will reconsider the position of those people who do not possess the relevant qualifications, for which we press in amendment No. 31. Both the Minister and his colleagues must say clearly to local authorities and the people of this country who will value those 53 million properties. If the general public do not have confidence in those people, the council tax will be flawed from the beginning.

When the Bill is considered in the other place, or when the Secretary of State makes regulations later, I hope that a much firmer approach will be adopted regarding the people who will carry out the valuations. I say that for the sake of the people of this country, who are looking for any alternative—although I believe that ours is the best—to the poll tax. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Douglas: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 3, line 14, at end insert—

'(5A) Where any survey report for the purpose of rating contains details of numbers in a local authority area in receipt of income support and those engaged in full-time education, special regard should be had to the effects of these categories in determining the values placed on property in the area.'.

Subsection (5), which I seek to amend, says:

"(5) For the purposes of the valuation the Commissioners of Inland Revenue may disclose to a person appointed under subsection (4) above—

(a) any survey report obtained for any purpose of rating, including non-domestic rating;".

[Mr. Douglas]

The object of the Bill is to introduce a new tax using banding based on capital values. No doubt when we debate clause stand part we shall have the opportunity to discuss that aspect further.

If capital values are to be used, I assume that the valuation will be carried out on an arm's-length basis, and that there will be neither coercion nor favouritism. If that is the case—it is a reasonable assumption—the supply and demand for property in any one area will have some influence. The prices paid for property will be related to the buoyancy of incomes in the area. That is why I ask that special regard should be given to two categories.

The Government, in their wisdom, sought to consider the position of people on low incomes. Chapter 3 of their consultative document says:

"The Government intend to make arrangements to ensure that people on low incomes are not called on to make a disproportionate contribution to local taxation".

It has bemused everyone that the Government feel capable of making substantial changes and of bringing in a new form of tax that they hope will be in operation by 1993 and will be much fairer than the poll tax—it is difficult to see how a new tax could be less fair than the poll tax—yet simultaneously persist in asking the poorest sections of the population to pay at least 20 per cent. of the poll tax. I see that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), is not in his place as he is taking part in some necessary consultations, but he knows that local authorities in Scotland have made repeated representations to the Scottish Office asking for the encumbrance to be removed.

I do not know what the current estimates are for the cost of exempting students and people on income support, but I was told that it might be about £40 million a year. If that were set against the cost of collecting taxes from those poorer sections of the population, it would be a deal to which the Scottish Office should give urgent consideration.

The amendment was intended to draw attention to the fact that, if large numbers of people in an area are students, or are on income support, that affects the values of property, which in turn affects the so-called buoyancy of the tax. If the Government acknowledge that fact in relation to the future tax, why will they not acknowledge it now in relation to the poll tax?

The Minister should answer those questions. I had hoped that a Scottish Office Minister would reply to the debate, but I suspect that I shall be disappointed—or I may be pleasantly surprised by receiving a more positive response than usual. The situation in Scotland is desperate. It is absurd, for instance, that the Shetland isles may have to pursue students to pay a proportion of the poll tax at a cost far in excess of any tax revenue that could possibly be collected. That is farcical, and brings the tax into disrepute.

If the Minister says that the amendment is poorly drafted, I must plead guilty but it provides an opportunity for the Government to remove such categories from the current tax, in the way that they intend to remove them from the tax that they propose to introduce in April 1993.

9.15 pm

Mr. Key: It is a pleasure to reply to the debate initiated by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). Most of the issues that he raised were not specifically Scottish, so I hope that he will accept the spirit of my reply.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that we intend to introduce the council tax by 1993 and he found a clever way to introduce the 20 per cent. argument. As he knows, we are carefully considering this and shall continue to do so. Local taxation has been subject to rapid flux and another change would not be broadly welcomed.

The most important answer to the hon. Gentleman's thesis is that we have made resources available to ensure that the poorest in society will be able to pay the tax themselves or, if they are allowed 100 per cent. on benefits, we have ensured that their benefits reflect that. There is no reason for anybody to think that he would benefit if the system were changed in a bureaucratic and unnecessary way.

I shall certainly not taunt the hon. Gentleman with allegations of poor drafting. It is tedious of Ministers to say such things and for a long time when I was a Back Bencher I had to listen to such taunts. The survey reports prepared for rating have never needed to contain the kind of statistics to which the hon. Gentleman refers. At best, they are tangential to the job in hand. While the characteristics of an area affect the market for property and hence its value, I cannot understand why special regard should be paid to those two indicators in determining the value of a property.

The amendment mentions people on income support. The number of such people in a given area will affect the extent to which people in that area will benefit from the 100 per cent. benefits proposed for the council tax. However, of itself that has no bearing on the value of property. We are consulting on these proposals and rebates for those on income support will be an integral part of the council tax. In the main, these are matters for the legislation that we intend to introduce in the autumn, at which time hon. Members will have ample opportunity to consider them.

The amendment mentions

"numbers in a local authority area . . . and those engaged in full-time education,".

Taken at face value, that must include all schoolchildren, but I do not think that is what the amendment seeks. Even if it relates only to those who are potentially liable for the council tax, that does not in any way affect the allocation, based on the value of an individual property, to a specific band. Therefore the amendment does not have a place in the Bill.

We propose that, if the first or second adult in a property is a student, each will receive a full personal discount. We propose similar treatment for student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainees. If there are no other adults in a household of students, that household will receive two discounts. As I have said, we are consulting on these proposals, and discount for students is a matter for the main legislation to be introduced in the autumn.

Mr. Douglas: I am relying on memory, but I understood in relation to the 20 per cent. for students that

the Secretary of State for Scotland said that the matter would be constantly considered by him and COSLA. Has there been a change in that?

Mr. Key: I shall invite the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), to give the Scottish perspective on that. My understanding is that we have made proposals for students but have said that details have still to be worked out. For instance, we must deal with the treatment of students in halls of residence. What would be the situation if students were in accommodation owned by one of them? What would be the position of business rating were students to be living in a commercial property?

The hon. Gentleman is right—there is still a consultation process to come, and we shall listen to what is said, but our intention is clear. Where the first or second adult in a property is a student, each will receive the full personal discount. The House will have ample opportunity to consider all these matters when we debate the main Bill. Therefore, although I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will not agree with me in this, I hope that he will accept my invitation to take part in the debates on that, which will happen later in the year and beyond. I hope that he will not press his amendment.

Mr. Douglas: I am a bit disappointed by the Minister's reply. Perhaps the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) will clarify it by means of a letter to me. That would be temporarily acceptable. I understand that the House wishes to move on, so I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The First Deputy Chairman: Before I call the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to open the debate, I remind the Committee that we have had a good run in debates on amendments to clause 3. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to cover ground that has already been covered in those debates.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to you, Sir Paul, for allowing a clause stand part debate. In debates on a Great Britain Bill, amendments often are dealt with largely on an English basis and Scottish Members, and, to be fair, the Scottish Minister, stay out of debates because of an understanding that there will be an opportunity to raise one or two Scottish points at a stage such as this. I have heard your ruling, Sir Paul, but I have one or two Scottish points to raise.

There is a constant fascination in these exchanges about the casual way in which Ministers slip in, as though they were Conservative initiatives, policies and concessions that have been wrung out of them by the anger of public opinion and the persistence of the Opposition. With some style and a ring of conviction, the Under-Secretary said in a previous debate that the Government were introducing a policy of 100 per cent. rebates, as though it were an act of spontaneous generosity that the Conservatives had long been contemplating and had only now been able to introduce. We know that, instead, they have been fighting doggedly against this for months. That is true of many other changes.

The right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) used to tell us that returning to a property tax of any sort would be a "hammer blow" to the people of Edinburgh that could not be contemplated. It was anathema and heresy. Now, even the doughtiest defender of the poll tax, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is telling us that a rating system is an absolutely splendid thing as long as one does not admit that it is a rating system. It is all a matter of terminology.

My points are concerned with the valuation system. We have here another interesting novelty. The hon. Member for Eastwood is no doubt about to sing, in dulcet tones, the virtues of capital valuation. I will not bore the House with quotations from the many stirring speeches that he made about how unacceptable and unfair capital valuation was, and how, in the tree-lined suburbs of Newton Mearns and Pollokshields, the bourgeoisie would be rising in wrath against any Government wicked enough to introduce such a thing. If that happens, I promise him that we shall be cheering on the bourgeoisie, so long as they confine their attentions to the ballot box.

I have some fundamental questions for the Minister. I am sure that he will have no difficulty in answering them, but I have found them obscure. I listened to the Under-Secretary of State for Wales describing, with the somewhat arrogant and abrasive style that he has made his own, small groups of intrepid valuers with different degrees of professionalism in England and Wales setting out to do the business for the Inland Revenue and the Government. The implication, presumably was that in England and Wales there would be an independent valuation for every property initially.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No.

Mr. Dewar: It is interesting that the Minister has explained that that is not the position.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I do not want to hear from the hon. Gentleman. I am using him as a paving device to ask some questions of Scottish Office Ministers.

I ask the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to explain the Government's intentions in respect of the initial valuation, which will come into effect on 1 April 1993 if he has his way. Is it expected that every property in Scotland will be valued individually? That is what has been recommended by the assessors. As I understand it, that is what they want. The Minister seems puzzled, but perhaps the answer is simple. Everyone will know what his band is. I believe that that is common ground. I want to know whether every householder will know the individual valuation that led to him being placed in a certain band.

If the Minister says no in answer to my question, that will raise several interesting implications. Perhaps, for example, he will say something about the appeals procedure. If there is not to be individual valuation and no knowledge of the basis on which the valuation was determined, it will make the appeals procedure especially difficult. If the bands are broad, questions will be raised about the basis on which properties have been assigned to particular bands. Will valuations be made on the basis on which the Inland Revenue's valuation office arrived at the figures that the Secretary of State for Scotland announced recently to reassure the public that they would not be disadvantaged by the new system?

The Minister will remember the letter which was signed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on 8 May, which was

[Mr. Dewar]

sent to me. I shall not quote it extensively, but I shall use fragments of the phraseology. The right hon. Gentleman wrote that it was

"essentially an in-house exercise."

He told me that it was "essentially statistical" and claimed that it was not fair to ask him to go into the details. I can understand the certain diffidence that ensued.

It would seem that the Inland Revenue's valuation officers' establishment undertook its exercise on the basis of existing knowledge. It would seem also that the officers did not inspect individual properties. I presume that, for the valuation roll of 1993, when the new tax comes into operation, work will be done on the ground. Is it intended that every house will be inspected? I understand that the answer is no. That is fine; I understand that.

When he replies, perhaps the Minister will explain briefly what will happen. Will there be a system of beacons? Will there be beacon properties? Will there be valuation that is based on a random scatter in an area? It may be that in a spec-built estate every house will be exactly the same, they all having been built five or six years ago. The valuation of one such house may lead to the valuer having a good idea of the value of each house on the estate. However, in the sort of street in which the Minister lives or in which I live——

Mr. Allan Stewart: I do not live in the street.

Mr. Dewar: I realise that the hon. Gentleman is the sort of man who would live in a circus. On this occasion, however, I am not referring to St. Andrew's house under present management. I am being serious because this is a serious matter.

In the sort of street in which the hon. Gentleman lives, or in which I live, there will be substantially different valuations. The houses in the street where I live will range from £70,000 or £80,000 well into the top band of £160,000. The value of individual houses will not be known unless each one is visited and valued. If that is not done and it is assumed that each house in the street will be in the top band, I can say with confidence that there will be a rash of appeals. It is probable that everyone in the street will appeal.

If, on the other hand, it is assumed that each house is of such value that it does not enter the top band, the tax spread will become unbalanced in a way that I am sure Ministers would not wish to defend. I urge the Minister to explain exactly what will happen between now and 1 April 1993. It is no good him simply saying that every house will not be valued. He must tell us much more about what he has in mind.

9.30 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities believes that, once someone is in a band, he will be in it in perpetuity. In the *Municipal Journal* he said, in terms, that, once in a band, the situation would never change. The banding system will be a selection of the sheep from the goats because once one is in it one will stay there. There will be no effective revaluation, no matter what one does.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland has today commented on the Government's proposals, some of which will be of consolation to the Minister, because it supports some aspects of the new system. However, as professional valuers, they say that the idea that everyone can be put in a band in perpetuity is nonsense. Perhaps they are being ambitious, but they believe that a revaluation every three years is desirable and necessary. They think that it is a wretched pretence—they used the word "pretence"—to imagine that there can be a once-and-for-all placement of properties and that the valuation base is somehow ever young and ever green and never needs revision. With the passing of time, it becomes hopelessly out of date. It then inevitably becomes a mockery and a source of discontent.

The Minister will be familiar with the survey that was carried out by Paisley college on the unit for land values. I have no reason to believe that it was not done by skilled and impartial people. They found that 25 per cent. of the properties surveyed were within 5 per cent. of the end of the bands proposed by the Government. They therefore concluded that there would probably be more appeals under that system than under the previous rating system, which the Government criticised so heavily.

The Minister has much explaining to do. Naturally, there are problems of extensions and improvements, but, more fundamentally, there is the problem of the state of repair of a house. The Minister told my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), in a letter dated 5 June:

"Some assumptions will have to be made for valuation purposes about the state of repair of the property. In keeping with the suggestion made in the consultation paper, the bandings used for the illustrative bills presume that properties are maintained in a reasonable state of repair, whether this was by the occupier or by the landlord."

For illustrative purposes, that is a proper assumption to make. One says that, although the state of repair affects the outcome, for this academic exercise—this in-house statistical exercise, as the Secretary of State called it—the Government assume that every house is in good repair and equal and can therefore exclude that highly relevant factor for that purpose.

However, in real life, things are not equal. Some houses are in a good state of repair and are well maintained and improved while others are not. It affects the value considerably. I presume that, in those circumstances, a fair picture could be obtained only by the individual inspection of the property, which the Minister specifically told us, by a shake of the head during our brief exchanges, will not take place.

The Minister's letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart admitted clearly that assumptions must be made for the purpose of this exercise. However, assumptions cannot be made in reality. Rather we must find out what that reality is. How will that be done before 1993 if the Minister does not provide for individual valuations? I hope that he will deal with that matter.

I realise that some of my hon. Friends wish to speak, but I want to raise a couple more points. I shall keep some specific questions about the use of private sector valuers for an amendment on a later clause. The Minister will know, so I do not need to underline the point too heavily, that we have considerable doubts about how the valuation system is being banded under this scheme. We also know that an extremely wealthy bachelor living in an expensive property cannot pay more than twice that paid by a couple living in a difficult-to-let council house. The range has been dramatically squeezed.

In the best of senses, the Government are in a protection racket. To be fair, the Secretary of State has not tried to hide that. The people who are being protected are

those at the top of the range. Those at the bottom, the modest range of the scale, will be paying more than they need to pay in order to give that protection to those in expensive properties. That is part of the essence of the scheme.

I raise that in passing because it is a bitter pill to swallow. I remember, as I am sure the Minister does, the highly coloured speeches bordering on the dishonest which were made by Scottish Office Ministers in the days when they were attacking the Opposition's property-based system. Because it was based on capital values——

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): They are both rating systems.

Mr. Dewar: The Secretary of State is right, but ours is a fair rating system and the Government have drafted in a measure of unfairness. However, he is right: by any definition they are both rating systems. But the Government attacked our rating system because it was capital value based, which they said was particularly unfair on council house tenants who bought and on people at the bottom of the owner-occupying range who would be penalised by capital valuation. That point was repeatedly made by the right hon. and learned Member for Pentlands, backed up by his junior Ministers, his satraps and acolytes of one sort or another.

Therefore, I find it rather hard that, when we are faced with a Conservative capital valuation, which presumably has all the same disadvantages for those council house tenants who have bought their homes under the right-to-buy legislation, we have the added twist which certainly was not in the Labour party's scheme that those at the bottom will pay more than they need to because the Government have foreshortened the liability at the top of the range. That shows the hypocrisy, crocodile tears and synthetic anger which marked the attacks made upon our proposals only a few months ago.

In the letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart the Minister deals with that problem in a lordly way. He says that the seven bands are broad and of course there is no need for people who live at the bottom end of the scale, people who buy their council houses, to worry because they will be

"concentrated in the lower bands."

That is the end of the argument. That was not his attitude a few short months ago, but we did not rig the field to hit the people on whose behalf he was protesting.

The Government have many questions to answer. There has been reference to the report of the Audit Commission for England and Wales, and it would be interesting to have a similar report from the Scottish equivalent before too long. Some of the matters dealt with cannot be canvassed at length in this debate, but the Minister will know, for example, that the Audit Commission has taken the view that the 20 per cent. rule should go now. It pointed out that the net gain to the Exchequer is far outweighed by the costs of collection which, in England and Wales, are two and a half times the net yield to the Exchequer of the payments made by those who are responsible for only 20 per cent. of their tax.

The Minister will also have noticed the remarkable point made by the Audit Commission:

"The low proportion of expenditure now to be raised by local taxation, combined with the very high gearing on tax rises, may make the system unsustainable in the long term without either extensive capping or a reduction in the functions of local government. Neither would be supported by the commission."

That is the truth. The system has been rigged in a way that has made it unsustainable and ramshackle. It is, as the Audit Commission clearly implies, by definition a danger to the fabric of local democracy as we have known it.

But there is another point in the Audit Commission's report which is highly relevant to the clause. Much doubt has been expressed in the professional journals by the professionals and, to be fair, by many politicians, including the Secretary of State for the Environment, about whether the Government would be able to make their target of 1 April 1993 in England and Wales. That criticism—let us be fair and call it, rather, a worry or a nagging doubt—about whether it will be possible runs through the Audit Commission's report. The best that it has to say is that the timetable may be achievable, but it goes on to say that there are many reasons to believe that it may not be achievable. It warns the Government that they should be ready to abandon the timetable if it cannot be kept.

What I have to say is of great importance and interest to Scotland. If the Minister considers, for example, the current issue of the local government publication he will see many reasons advanced why it will not be possible to put the system in place in England by April 1993, but none of those reasons applies in Scotland. If, as some of us are beginning to suspect, it will be possible to kill the poll tax on 1 April 1993 in Scotland but not in England and Wales, it would be a monstrous insult to the people of Scotland if the killing of the poll tax were delayed for another year north of the border merely to save the blushes of the Department of the Environment south of the border.

It would be wholly unacceptable if the Secretary of State for Scotland kept in step with the Secretary of State for the Environment merely because that would make for good relations in the Cabinet room. I should like an assurance and a guarantee for the Under-Secretary of State that if he can end the poll tax on 1 April 1993 he will do so. We believe that he could do it more quickly but, even if we accept his scheme, we believe that that timetable could be kept. Will he give an undertaking to do that, even if it means that we end the poll tax—as, in all justice, we have a right to do—a year before the rest of the country? That is the categorical guarantee that we seek from the Minister tonight.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I have always considered that the announcement made about the council tax by the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for the Environment was merely to provide a lull in the storm in which the Government find themselves with regard to local government finance.

The more one considers the fine print of the Government's proposals, the clearer it becomes that there are far more difficulties in the local council tax than the Government care to admit. Some of those difficulties were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) a few moments ago.

I had always thought that each house in Scotland, England and Wales would be valued individually. That seems to be the common sense way to proceed because no two houses are the same. However, the Minister's grunt revealed that each house will not be valued individually, but that there will instead be a block valuation. I want to

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

show the Minister by reference to houses in my constituency what a ludicrous result that is likely to produce.

As the Minister knows, Edinburgh is composed of tenements. In one tenement stairway there can be a tremendous variation in the value of property. A main door flat can be worth four or five times the basement or top flat. In any one street there can be a variation in house prices ranging from £30,000 to £1 million. Indeed, that is the case in one street in my constituency, a street which is known not only to Scottish Ministers but, I suspect, to most hon. Members—the Royal Mile. It is common to find that small houses can be bought for £20,000 or £30,000 and that large houses are sold for more than £500,000. Is the Minister seriously suggesting that they should be put in the same band because they are in the same area?

The Minister cannot even compare like houses with like houses. One main door flat might be completely different from a main door flat four or five doors further up the street. Edinburgh, like many other cities, comprises streets built at different times. For example, in the street in which I live there are grade A listed buildings and other buildings which are not listed. Because they were built at different times there is a tremendous variation in value. In addition, some houses have been improved, but others have not.

I assure the Minister that members of the public will feel a great sense of injustice if houses are lumped into the same valuation band merely because the Minister did not feel that the expense of valuing each house was justified. It seems ludicrous not to value each house individually, especially in a city such as Edinburgh where there are not enough broadly similar large housing schemes to attempt to value houses on such a broad base. Under the Scottish Office guidelines, although in one street some houses could fall within band C and others within band G, it appears that they will all be lumped together, possibly in the bottom band, possibly in the top band, or possibly somewhere else.

9.45 pm

I hope that the Minister will tell us why he does not propose to value each and every house. Does he accept that each street and each house is different? If he does not, many people throughout the country will appeal against the valuations of their houses. What guidelines will be issued for the valuation? What will the valuers have to take into account? My hon. Friend the member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) recalled that the Minister had said that for England and Wales, it would be a once-and-for-all valuation. That does not make sense. Prices change quite dramatically, sometimes because of market forces and sometimes for other reasons.

In a street near to where I live there is a Georgian house which, until a few years ago, was renowned across Scotland, if not across the United Kingdom, as a house of ill repute. There were queues outside its door every time the US navy put into port. A few years ago, its owner died and it was closed—*[Interruption.]* I shall not name the house because I am going to a party there on Saturday. It has new owners, of course, who use it for rather different purposes.

Ten or 15 years ago, a Georgian mansion could be picked up for £15,000. The same house would now be worth more than £1 million. Had the proposed council tax been in force 10 or 15 years ago, that house would have been valued on a once-and-for-all basis, as would have been the house of ill repute. That cannot be right.

What appeal mechanism will there be? Many people may feel aggrieved if their houses are so valued that, by just £1, they find themselves in a higher band. Valuation is a hit-and-miss affair—*[Interruption.]* The Minister should not grunt from a sedentary position. Why does he not intervene?

Mr. Allan Stewart: I answered the very same question as that asked by the hon. Gentleman on Second Reading. It is obvious that he did not attend that debate.

Mr. Darling: I did not attend, but I am aware of what the Minister said on that occasion. There is still a great deal of uncertainty about the Government's intentions. The council tax is being rushed through in a blind panic, and as people realise the implications on their pockets many more questions will be asked.

The Minister has a duty to tell us how the valuations will be carried out. He must reassure people that, if they feel aggrieved because their houses have been lumped into an inappropriate band, they can do something about it. Otherwise, there will be just as much protest and fuss about the council tax as there has been about the poll tax, which the Government have been forced to abandon in a blind panic and in a desperate attempt to save their skins.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Clause 3 would fundamentally change the valuation process that is embodied in law in Scotland. It has been developed, tried and tested over many years, and it has been the backbone of the Scottish system. I understand that the Bill is only a paving measure, and that the future body of the law that will govern the valuation process will be made under secondary legislation and statutory instrument.

I am aware that another Bill will follow this Bill, but I cannot anticipate what it will contain. Perhaps the Minister can tell us. My primary concern is that, under this Bill, the burden of the new valuation system will be met entirely by regulations. I understand, too, that there is a more limited purpose to the valuation because we are trying to put properties into bands. The Minister may say that that is a much more restricted purpose than the whole panoply of the valuation laws that previously obtained. Before we pass clause 3, we must be sure that we understand exactly what it sets out to replace.

If secondary legislation is to be the main focus of the detail of the new tax, what will be the role of the courts? I can foresee all sorts of difficulties of interpretation. The system will be much more complicated than the Government perhaps anticipate. Much of the secondary legislation will have to go before the courts for clarification and interpretation, just as social security law causes all sorts of problems. I can foresee the difficulties of interpretation leading to precedents. We must give a great deal of consideration to the change in the balance before we agree to the clause.

The only figure in the Bill for the costs of administration is the round figure of £250 million which embraces England and Wales as well as Scotland. Can the Minister provide us with any further figures? What percentage of the £250 million will apply to Scotland? Although the problem may not be as big north of the border as south of it, what is his estimate of the manpower

increases? The explanatory memorandum states that it is difficult to make a firm, long-term prediction about that for England and Wales. Because we in Scotland have a system of assessors, the problem may be less, but if any figures are available for increased manpower in Scotland as a consequence of clause 3, I should be happy to know of them.

What is the Minister's view of the comments of the Opposition Front Bench about the Bill's timetable? It is absolutely crucial. Many people are making their own dispositions, and will continue to do so over the next couple of years, on the basis that the substantive legislation will be enacted in 1993. If there is any difficulty about that whatever—it may be less of a difficulty north of the border than south of it—it is important that the Goverment make the position clear in relation to Scotland now. Tonight they must undertake to keep the House updated. If it appears to the Secretary of State from the information that comes across his desk from his officials that there will be a significant slippage in the enforcement in 1993, I hope that he will pass that information on to the House at the earliest opportunity so that we can share the problems, if problems there are.

There are two difficulties which I shall not labour as they have been raised in the House. First, it is impossible to get properties into perpetual bands. That point has already been argued cogently and concisely, and I join those who have expressed concern under that heading. Secondly, I want to add my voice to those who are anxious about improvements. It is not possible in a banding system to ignore improvements. Yet, if I understand the Bill correctly, that is what the Government propose. If I am wrong about that, I hope that the Minister will be kind enough to put me right.

Will there be any constraints on appeals? Is it possible for someone to appeal no matter how different his estimate may be from the valuation placed on his property? Will there be a percentage of difference beyond which people may not appeal; or will it be wholly at the discretion of the individual who is given what he considers an erroneous valuation? In short, will there be any restraints on the process?

How many outstanding appeals are there already in Scotland? Information available to me suggests that there are about 600,000 outstanding business appeals in England and Wales and 38,000 old rating appeals. That is a backlog of several years before we even start considering new appeals.

As for rural areas, we have heard one sensible speech from a Glasgow direction and one from an Edinburgh direction. I well understand the points made about the Royal Mile and other parts of the central belt. In villages in rural areas it is difficult, especially in places such as the Borders, which has villages with castles at one end of a street and small houses at the other, to allocate valuations. Castles are being built in my village at the moment. There are also modest buts and bens in which local Members of Parliament live. No matter how skilled the valuer, how can he possibly walk along a village street applying bands left right and centre with any prospect of getting them right?

If we do not have any answers to these questions, we should think carefully before allowing the clause to be made law. We need a great deal more information than we have been given to date.

Mr. Douglas: This has been an interesting debate. As usual, I am a little bemused by the position of the Opposition. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) told the Government to hurry up and get the new system in place by 1993, but the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) offered cogent reasons why that could not be done. If that does not represent compression of bands, I do not know what does.

I know enough about the hon. Member for Garscadden to know that he is good at asking questions but not so good at answering them. I want to know, if there were a Labour Government in 1992, whether all this paraphernalia would be swept away and the Labour party would introduce their fair rates proposals seemingly overnight, thereby wiping out the continuing problems of the poll tax. In the absence of an answer to that question I shall leave the matter on one side.

The Government attempt to persuade us that banding produces simplification and speed. Those are the two elements that the Government adduce in favour of their approach. Simplification and speed might advantage those engaged in valuing property, especially in Scotland—that far I concede the argument of the hon. Member for Garscadden. We still have the 1989 valuation for Scotland —it is reasonably up to date. We also have a highly computerised system containing a great deal of information, and we have expertise in the form of the Scottish assessors.

Those are the advantages that the Government can pray in aid of their proposals—and they may favour those who administer the scheme. But they do not necessarily persuade those who will have the scheme administered for them. I expect a great deal of difficulty in the context of properties previously owned by local authorities and now passing into owner-occupation. The market value of such property has not been tested. That will present a considerable problem for the valuer, and also for those who receive the valuation.

That leads me to the type and nature of appeals. The valuation appeals committee in Scotland has been reasonably cheap and effective.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Douglas: I was referring to the valuation appeals committee. It is a reasonably cheap and effective way for individuals to plead their case before a tribunal. Will that procedure be continued? That would be a valuable piece of information.

In previous debates, I alluded to the method and approach to be adopted for capital valuations. I hope that I took the whole Committee with me when I argued that the deal must be freely arranged. It could not relate to a property that had been bequeathed by a mother or father to a son or daughter, or to a property that had been valued in a highly congested market. It must be made plain that the valuation should be carried out at arm's length.

[Mr. Douglas]

The date at which a property is valued is also of supreme importance. There is no point in using information that was obtained in 1989; the time of the valuation must be stipulated. I suggest that it would be detrimental if the valuation was carried out more than a year ago. The hon. Member for Garscadden and others have examined the state of the property market, and hon. Members on both sides of the Committee have suggested improvements.

It would be farcical to apply a valuation in perpetuity to a but and ben in the highlands with an acre of land attached to it if it were possible to build a four, five or six-bedroomed house on the land and still call it a but and ben. That would be possible if we were stuck with properties in valuation bands in perpetuity. The Minister should clarify that problem.

Above all, the Minister has an obligation to tell us whether the resources are available to introduce the tax in 1993. I shall not go over the views of the Scottish National party about the possibility of a local income tax; we shall deal with that again in debates in another place.

The Minister must give us an absolute assurance that resources are available to put the tax into practice at the proposed date. The assessors say that they can do it, and they are confident that they can do it in Scotland, as the hon. Member for Garscadden pointed out. It would be farcical if Scotland were held up because resources and expertise are not available south of the border.

Finally, there are different types of banding north and south of the border. We have not referred to the possibility of upsetting arrangements in border areas. However, it has been conceded that there can be different types of banding in different parts of the United Kingdom. Perhaps the Minister could give me his views on why it is impossible to have different types of banding within Scotland. I can understand the advantage of an all-Scottish banding system, but there might be an advantage in having different arrangements for the central belt and in the Highlands and Islands. I cannot see the logic of trying to pressurise the whole of Scotland into the same banding structure, but perhaps the Minister could give us his views.

I am extremely suspicious about the trust of this Bill and of the Government's attitude towards local government finance. I must put the same strictures before the Opposition spokesmen. Both those parties are moving towards a costly, complicated system which, in one form or another, is a move back to the rates. That is costly and complicated and it will not last. It is my view and that of my party that it is a form of taxation which denies local authorities the accountability that they deserve and denies them a buoyant source of finance. The only argument that we have heard from the Dispatch Box against a local income tax has been that the United Kingdom Treasury will not wear it. I suspect that the argument that we have heard from a Tory Government at the Dispatch Box would be similarly deployed by a Labour Government.

Scotland deserves a local income tax, it could work in Scotland and the Scottish National party will be putting that argument to the Scottish people in the weeks and months ahead.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In an earlier debate, I commented that the Committee was in the unusual position of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the prospective Scottish National party candidate for Garscadden agreeing with each other. I am glad that normal service has been resumed in this debate.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) rightly and properly pointed out that this is a paving Bill and a paving clause. Of course, I shall try to answer as many as possible of the questions put during the debate, but hon. Members will recognise that the main Bill is yet to come.

I am aware that it would not be proper for me to go over ground that has already been covered in the course of the many debates on clause 3. However, I must briefly tell the hon. Member for Garscadden that we are not introducing a rating system. The council tax is a combined property and personal tax and there are innumerable differences between it and the rating system which I shall take other opportunities to remind the hon. Member of.

Considering the stirring defence of the roof tax by the hon. Member for Garscadden, I am surprised that he appears to have abandoned it for a different system.

I shall start with the serious and more technical matters mentioned by hon. Members. First, I shall respond to what the hon. Member for Garscadden said about banding. It is of interest to the Committee that the assessors' view—the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has referred to their views on a number of occasions—is quite clear. They say that a banding system finds favour with the Scottish Assessors Association in that such a system should lend itself to a less detailed valuation of every property and should ensure that the change to the new basis can be introduced within the proposed timetable—a number of hon. Members referred to the timetable.

I believe that I can reassure the hon. Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire by drawing attention to the considerable amount of data already held by the assessors. They have computerised data which is supplemented by plans and survey details of every domestic subject in their regions up to 1989. That data covers every aspect that could be deemed relevant to capital value.

The assessors have informed the Scottish Office—hon. Members have the same information—that that data could be readily adapted to achieve capital value banding. That data has been supplemented by recording all house sales information up to 1988 when sale prices were used as secondary evidence under the old system. Since then, sales evidence and sale prices have been readily available in all regional offices. The update of the existing computerised data would be a task undemanding of professional staff or resources.

Mr. Kirkwood: That information is helpful, but does it cover individual properties? Under the Data Protection Act 1988, can I pay my 25p and find out what my property is valued at in Ettrickbridge?

Mr. Stewart: I did not anticipate being asked about the Data Protection Act and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about that.

I assure the House that updating the system to incorporate new and/or altered properties since 1988 could be readily achieved. I can tell the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central that the data on the Royal Mile is

already available in considerable detail. For a street of new owner-occupied housing which is more or less identical, it is not necessary to do an individual valuation.

Mr. Darling: Let us suppose that the Minister is right —I have no reason to believe that he is not—and that the assessor has a valuation of all the properties on the Royal Mile ranging from a rather old castle at the top to a highly desirable palace at the bottom, with houses of various sizes and shapes in between. Is the Minister saying that it will be possible to attach an individual value to each one of those properties and that they will be banded accordingly? Or will there be some attempt to band the whole street, part of the street or types of housing in the street? The Minister must appreciate that there are tremendous variations in value between different houses in the street even though they may be classified as the same sort of thing be it basement flat, tenement, castle or palace.

Mr. Stewart: Each individual house will have an individual band attached to it and the individual occupier will be aware of that. It is likely that multi-storey council flats will be in the same band. The Royal Mile is at the other end of the spectrum.

Mr. Dewar: Earlier the Minister said that the Scottish Assessors Association saw advantages in banding. I am prepared to concede that, because I have had the advantage of seeing its draft recommendations and comments on the Government's consultative document. He will be aware, however, that the association also strongly urged that, before placing a property in a band, it should be individually valued, as was done under the previous system. I understand from the Minister that the Government have ruled that out.

Mr. Stewart: No.

Mr. Dewar: But the Minister said firmly that there would not be individual valuations.

Mr. Stewart: I may have been misunderstood. Every individual property is allocated to a particular band. Precisely how that is done is a matter for the professional judgment of assessors. Many properties in many streets will fall into the same band, but that is not true of the Royal Mile. The assessors maintain that, by the modification and use of existing computerised data and facilities, a capital value could be produced for each property within the narrowest of margins, and certainly to a degree more accurate than simply ascribing the property to one of the proposed bands. By so doing, the assessors believe that that would minimise and reduce the work load arising from appeals, a matter to which I shall return.

10.15 pm

The hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and for Dunfermline, West asked me about costs. I do not have a figure to give to the Committee, but the assessors believe that the work can be achieved within or with only marginal adjustments to existing budgets. The Government have made it clear that they will compensate local authorities for any reasonable additional costs that they incur as a result of the exercise.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked about relative changes. We shall return to that point in the context of the Bill after the consultation period has ended. The phrase used by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden about protection rackets may find its way into the public domain in surprising areas. *[Interruption.]* I was thinking of Newton Mearns as a random example.

The hon. Members for Dunfermline, West, for Edinburgh, Central and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred to appeals. I can confirm that there will be an appeals procedure. Like the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, one is attracted to the idea of a valuation appeals committee, but we are making no definite plans until the consultation period has ended. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked me about outstanding appeals. I shall deal with that point in the second half of the letter that I will write to him after the debate.

Hon. Members in general asked about the timing of the introduction of the council tax. The Government's commitment to introducing the tax both north and south of the border is absolutely clear—April 1993. In relation to Scotland I can confirm that the assessors have told us that they believe that there will be——

Mr. Dewar: There is a growing feeling, which may not be justified in the event, that it may be possible—because of the more up-to-date valuation roll and the experience of the assessors, due to the fact that their software is in place —to meet the April 1993 target in Scotland but that it may be more difficult to meet it south of the border. If that happens, will the Minister give a guarantee that he will go ahead in Scotland and kill off the poll tax earlier than in England and Wales?

Mr. Stewart: I do not know whether the Minister of State's comment was heard by the hon. Member for Garscadden. I can confirm that the Government's commitment is absolutely clear. I end by saying in relation to Scotland that, for their part, the assessors in Scotland have made it clear that they do not regard it as a matter of great difficulty to meet the timetable.

I have not talked in general about the clause, since other matters relating to it were considered in earlier debates. I hope that the Committee will agree that clause 3 should stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Dewar: I hope and expect that the Minister will be on the Opposition Benches before these decisions arise, but it is being widely canvassed in all the professional journals that the timetable is very tight and that it may not be possible to keep to it. I do not intend to divide the Committee on the clause. If we carried the day, we should be in the illogical position of having stopped all work on preparing for the earliest possible demise of the poll tax. I do not believe that that is what people want. We shall continue to press the Minister on the details. I am impressed neither by the comprehensive nature of his argument nor by the strength of his position. He may feel that there is cheering in the streets of Newton Mearns, but over a wider range of Scottish opinion I think that my scepticism is fully shared.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5

FURTHER PROVISION AS TO VALUATION IN SCOTLAND

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 5, leave out line 6.

I wish to speak briefly to the amendment, for limited technical reasons. This will be a Scottish equivalent of the earlier debate about the position in England, which dealt with the question of employing private sector valuers to aid the assessors in their task. I do not want to push the debate to any great length, but perhaps the Minister could say a word or two on that subject.

I realise that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), poured scorn on the idea that some sort of professional qualification would be expected. The implication was that experienced estate agents, even without qualifications as valuers, might be used.

It would also be helpful if the Minister said a word or two about the position of regional councils. People who will be involved have raised a technical question with me. At present, the assessor is independent and presumably the assessor will be responsible for hiring the private sector valuers. If a problem arose with the private sector valuers' work—there could be a legal dispute, for example—would the regional council be responsible for the actions of the private sector figures, even though there is no direct contract between those people and the council? Presumably the contract will be between the assessor and the private sector valuers. Would the regional council be bound by that contract and therefore liable for those people's actions?

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's two questions, one of which was general and the other particular.

Our previous debate showed that the House is agreed that the Scottish assessors are well equipped, both with information and with computer systems, to enable them to carry out their task of valuation. Nevertheless, we do not wish to rule out the possibility that the private sector will be able to assist the assessors in certain circumstances.

For example, private sector valuers could provide effective input on new properties in some areas. It would be perverse to deny the assessors that option. Moreover, sometimes it may be more cost-effective for the private sector to participate. We would not want legislation to prevent its participation in such circumstances.

With regard to the more detailed legal point, I do not believe that there is a problem, but I shall take legal advice and perhaps write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dewar: I thank the Minister. I did not intend to start a lengthy debate and I find the tone of what he said reassuring, on the whole. Paragraph 2.29 of the Government's consultation paper contains a reference to the new system's requiring

"in addition the fullest possible involvement of private sector professionals."

I take that to refer to the difficulties south of the border, and that it does not represent the spirit in which the Scottish Office would expect the assessors to approach the matter.

I take the Minister's point that there may be special cases in which it is sensible to use outside help, when there is particular expertise in the private sector. I agree that it would be silly to rule that out, but I take it the Minister is not adopting the spirit of paragraph 2.29, which portrays the private sector as taking a major role in support of the Inland Revenue valuation officers. If that is a correct interpretation—I believe that it is—I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clauses 5 and 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

CITATION, REGULATIONS, ORDERS, EXTENT AND COMMENCEMENT

Mr. Douglas: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 6, line 41, leave out from 'instrument' to 'House' in line 42 and insert

'which shall not come into effect unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by each'.

I shall be brief on this simple issue of principle. The Government repeatedly argue that this is a paving measure. It is a time-honoured practice to use statutory instruments. About 100 years ago we might have been able to go against that practice, but it is difficult to do so today.

The Bill is a new and significant measure that affects everybody in Scotland, England and Wales. Statutory instruments using the negative procedure do nothing to enhance the stature of Parliament. The least that the Government can do for the mother of Parliaments is to replace the Bill's entitlement to use the negative procedure with the affirmative procedure. For many years we have seen how the Government majority operates and it has been demonstrated again in Committee. If the Government do not accept my amendment, I intend to divide the Committee.

Mr. Key: I shall explain the procedure. I cannot understand why hon. Members should wish to have an affirmative resolution each time that it is necessary to make some minor technical change to the definition of domestic property in England, Scotland or Wales, or to prescribe that a property which stands in more than one area shall, for the purposes of valuation, be deemed to stand within a single, specified area. I accept that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was focusing largely on the regulations to be made under clause 3(3), which prescribes the assumptions and principles on which the valuation is to be carried out.

These are important matters, but they do not warrant the affirmative resolution procedure. That is because the underlying principle of the valuation, the banding of domestic property, is in the Bill. The regulations about assumptions are subject to negative resolution, following the precedent for similar regulations for non-domestic rating made under paragraph 2(8) of schedule 6 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Therefore, this is not something new and untried. I assure the Committee that there is no question of wishing to minimise the influence of Parliament. As I have said, these are technical matters and the negative resolution procedures are the most appropriate way for them to be dealt with.

Mr. Douglas: In the light of that extremely unsatisfactory reply, I shall press the amendment to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 177, Noes 270.

Division No. 171] **[10.28**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Alex Salmond.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glimour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*

Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 7 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 7

Reduction of service

'The Secretary of State shall not designate an English or Welsh authority as a result of this Act without publishing a list of services that it is expected the relevant authority will need to reduce as a result of designation'.—*[Mr. Bellotti.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to take new clause 11—*Reduction of services (Scotland)*—

'The Secretary of State shall not designate a Scottish authority as a result of this Act without publishing a list of services that it is expected the relevant authority will need to reduce as a result of designation.'.

Mr. Bellotti: The new clauses will ensure that local people know who is responsible when local services are cut. They are designed to heighten accountability so that there is a clear link between action that affects local residents and those who make the decision.

If the Government intend to override the democratic decisions of local councils, it should be made clear to everyone where the consequences of that action will lie. Councils may even find it useful to know what priority the Government would attach to their local services. For example, they may like to know whether the Government believe that housing repairs are more important than home helps or whether libraries are more important than swimming pools. It would be useful for a local authority to know whether, once the Bill is enacted, the Government will still require a local authority to fulfil all the statutory legislation that the Government have heaped on local councils in the past 12 years on environmental protection, mandatory improvement grants and providing sewers in rural areas.

The new clauses would also help to concentrate the mind of the Secretary of State, who would have to face up to the consequences of his decisions. The Government told us that the poll tax would increase accountability and we all know that that is untrue. The clauses would ensure that, under the new council tax, accountability will be seen to work in some way. They would leave the decision of which services to cut with the local authorities, but would ensure that local residents know what the Government intend when they cap an authority and force it to cut expenditure.

I do not wish to prolong this debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Far more hon. Members are present now than have been here at any point during the past two days' debate. In a sense, that is a great shame, but I am sure that those who have been absent will read the debate of the past two days in *Hansard* and will learn much from it. The point that the two new clauses make is perhaps the most important because it is a point of principle. The Government must face up to the consequences of their actions, which they are not used to doing and should do more often. I shall wait to see what the Minister has to say before I decide whether to divide the Committee.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) said that this is a large audience for a Liberal. I assure him that it is also a large audience for a Welsh Office Minister.

The effect of adding the new clauses to the Bill would be to make capping throughout Great Britain contingent on further action by the Government through the publication of lists of the services that the relevant

Secretary of State considers will need to be reduced as a result of capping. That suggestion is rather odd. In taking a decision about the level of capping for an authority, the Secretary of State is concerned with that authority's aggregate budget and the demands it makes on its charge payers, not with the components within that budget.

The aims of capping are to prevent excessive expenditure and to protect charge payers from its consequences. It remains for individual local authorities to decide their spending priorities within their revised budgets. Authorities are in many cases well able to reduce wastage, improve efficiency and manage their affairs better in order to restrain their expenditure. It is right that we should encourage them to do so. However, it is not for us to tell authorities how to order their priorities. I call on the Committee to reject the new clause.

10.45 pm

Mr. Bellotti: I am amazed that, after all the cuts in local authority services that have resulted from the Government's policy in the past 12 years, they should still be talking about wastage and efficiency. Most local councillors and most local authorities throughout Britain are doing their best despite the Government. The Bill should not be finance led, as it is; it should address itself to the delivery of local services, and the needs of the people in our local communities should be paramount. It is for that reason that I shall seek to divide the Committee.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 261.

Division No. 172] **[10.45 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Douglas, Dick
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Flynn, Paul
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lambie, David
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Ronald Fearn.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy

Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor,
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's and Prince of Wales's consent signified]

10.58 pm

Mr. Portillo: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Government are determined to introduce the council tax in England, Scotland and Wales on 1 April 1993. We will introduce a tax that is sustainable and that commends itself to the British public as fair, and we will introduce it at levels that are acceptable. To achieve that, it may be necessary for us to control the expenditure of local authorities, whatever their size and whatever their budgets may be. That is why the Bill extends our powers to limit local authority budgets below £15 million a year. It also makes it possible for us to commence the valuation process so that we can bring the council tax into operation in April 1993.

The Opposition have shown that they are opposed to any limitation on local government spending. They would like to see it rip. The figures for their alternative hold no water, because under their proposals local authority spending would go through the roof. We have every confidence that with this Bill we shall be able to introduce the council tax in 1993, and I have every confidence that the British public will accept it as a fair and sustainable basis for local taxation. I commend the Bill to the House.

11 pm

Mr. Blunkett: I oppose the Bill and ask the House to oppose its Third Reading.

The past two days have been a wasted opportunity which could have been used to rid the country of the poll tax by 1 April 1992. We could have ensured that the Conservative estimate of £800 million a year—we estimate £3·7 billion for the period to April 1994—was saved by introducing our alternative from 1 April. That money should be spent on services, protecting jobs and enhancing the quality of life of local communities. It should not be wasted through non-collection and the administration of the poll tax for a further two years.

Tonight we come to the end of a debate in which the Government have admitted their contempt for local government. The smallest authorities, with tiny budgets relative to macro-economic policy, will find themselves capped, not because of the impact of the expenditure on their local economy, but because the Government have had to do a cash deal with the Treasury to keep down the poll tax this year and next, and to ensure that resources are made available for that. That is the simple reason why those authorities that spend less than £15 million a year have been included in capping.

Worst of all, the Bill has introduced the valuation system for the council tax. Tory Members will live to regret both their absence from the debate and that they voted the wrong way, as their Whips told them to. We have accorded ourselves a valuation system which will be clumsy to implement and will lead to havoc in the appeals system, confusion, irritation and unfairness.

There is only one thing to be said about the measure. I said it at about 3.45 pm and I shall repeat it. The Secretary of State for the Environment said it on 22 June 1979—the last time a valuation system was attempted in England and Wales. He called on the British people to "tear it up". That is what we should do with the valuation system in this Bill. Instead, we should institute our fair rates proposals which would rid us of the poll tax for ever.

11.3 pm

Mr. Bellotti: During the passage of the Bill, it has been proven to the House that the system of bandings is unworkable, that the valuation process to be embarked upon will bring utter chaos and that 1993 is far too optimistic a date to have the system in place. The country knows that the poll tax was a failure, and it will soon find that the council tax is an equal failure.

The country knows that we do not want to go back to the rates. In the course of our deliberations a local income tax that could be in place by April 1992 has been on offer, as has the opportunity to remove capping from local authorities and thus the chance to ensure that there are no cuts in their services. Those opportunities were not taken by the Government, and that is why we should vote against giving the Bill a Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 258, Noes 185.

Division No. 173] **[11.04 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes

Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*

Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That, during the proceedings on the Matter of the Welsh economy, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet; and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

Hospital Services (North Down)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

11.17 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I regard myself as fortunate that I was successful in obtaining this special opportunity to raise in Parliament the crucial issue of hospital services in the North Down area.

There is what has been described as a deepening crisis in the provision of health services at the Ulster hospital, Dundonald, the Bangor hospital and the Ards hospital, Newtownards. Tomorrow, the Eastern health board will meet to impose further cuts in the money required for the North Down hospitals. I wish to state clearly in this debate tonight that I regard the board with a considerable degree of contempt because its members act as the minions of the Government. When the Government say jump, they jump, and when the Government say cut, they cut—I am glad to see that I have the approval of some hon. Members in this Chamber tonight.

To prove how dutiful they are, the members of the board cut with a vengeance and without regard for the welfare of the people of North Down. The Eastern health board is totally undemocratic because most of its members are not democratically elected, but are appointed by the Government.

We in Northern Ireland have been stripped of much of our democratic processes. Direct rule is a form of colonial rule, but we still have this Parliament of the United Kingdom. Therefore it is my duty as the elected representative of the people of North Down, young and old and regardless of their politics and religion, to make their protest and my personal protest on the Floor of the House of Commons.

I accuse the Eastern health board of deliberate and wilful discrimination against the people of North Down, and I accuse the Government of undermining the hospitals and health service of that area.

The Government cannot plead ignorance of the gravity of the situation. Time after time I have made representations to the Department of Health and over the years I have drawn attention to the deterioration in the national health service in North Down. Time after time, I have protested at the excessive delays which a number of my constituents have had to experience before obtaining a hospital appointment. Many are still waiting for hospital treatment. In some cases the illness is painful or distressing for other reasons, not least the intolerable wait for surgery which only exacerbates the anxiety and stress.

Those long-suffering people—human beings who have their rights—should be the main consideration of the Government and the Eastern health board. However, since 1989 the board has closed 200 beds at the Ulster hospital at Dundonald, a large, modern hospital. Beds have also been closed at the Ards and Bangor hospitals.

Last year, the board announced the closure of a further 18 surgical beds at the Bangor hospital. I attacked the board for that decision and it responded with the explanation that their closure was temporary. Sadly their closure was permanent and the board meant it to be permanent.

That so-called "temporary" closure did not have the support of the doctors of Bangor. Surely those medical practitioners should know better than the bureaucratic

and undemocratic Eastern health board. Sixteen of those doctors took the trouble to write a special letter to the then Minister responsible for health condemning the bed closures at Bangor hospital. They stated that that hospital provides

"a necessary and worthwhile service for out patients."

The doctors took that opportunity to scotch a mischievous suggestion that they did not support that hospital. The opposite is the case, because they asked the Minister for permission to send their patients directly to that hospital. They also asked for an urgent meeting with the then Minister. Six weeks later they received a reply —their request was rebuffed.

I believe that, if the present Minister responsible for health had written that letter, it would have shown more sympathy, because, no matter what others may say, I believe him to be a man of compassion. I hope that, as a result of bringing this case to his attention, he will be shocked into action.

The Ulster hospital at Dundonald has also suffered at the hands of the bureaucrats. Since 1989 almost 100 beds have been closed, including 28 paediatric beds, 20 plastic surgery beds, 20 gynaecology beds and 18 general surgery beds. In fact 20 per cent. of the hospital beds formerly available in the North Down area have been closed in recent years by the board. That represents one fifth of the hospital beds that were available for the treatment of patients. Sadly, all that has been done to the detriment of the people of North Down.

One might assume that the population of North Down was small and reducing, but that is not the case. There is an enormous population in the North Down area. There has been a population explosion there. About 260,000 people live in the area covered by the North Down and Ards unit of management, a considerable percentage of whom are elderly people who need easy and ready access to hospital care. At least 40 per cent. of the resident population in the Eastern health board area, which includes Belfast, live within the sphere of the North Down and Ards unit of management.

Despite the fact that 40 per cent. of the resident population live there, it has, unbelievably, only 18 per cent. of the board's total number of hospital beds. Anyone can see that that is totally unfair. I hope that the Minister, in the comment that he is now making to his ministerial colleague, is agreeing with what I say. That miserable and alarming figure—I am not referring to the Minister now —which clearly demonstrates the grave injustice that is being done to the people of North Down will be even further reduced as a result of the board's proposed cuts. And more cuts will be made the following year.

May I give another example of the injustice done to the people of North Down? The budget of the North Down area of management is approximately £38 million. That figure—for last year—is the most recently available one. The budget of the City hospital for the same period—only one of the many hospitals in Belfast—was approximately £62 million. That proves to me, as I have long argued, that Belfast should be hived off from the Eastern health board area. The City hospital's tower block cost about £70 million. In fact, it cost more, due to the extras that were added on over the years. That vital money was drained away from the funding of the Ulster and Bangor hospital and the Ards hospital, Newtownards.

In the face of public fury, the eastern health board has retreated from its original intention to impose cash savings of £1 million. The board states that it will provide

"non-recurring assistance, up to £350,000, for this year."

I emphasise the words "for this year." That money will not be provided next year. Consequently, in 1992 there will be further cuts in the realistic funding required for the hospitals in the North Down area. It may mean in due course the end of the remaining acute facilities in Bangor hospital. That would be a scandal. It would arouse great and militant anger. That is one reason why I shall fight with all my might the undermining of the hospital services in the North Down area.

Let me make it perfectly clear that the North Down hospitals are most efficiently managed and truly cost effective. The Government talk of waste in many United Kingdom hospitals which must, they say, be eradicated. There is no fat in the Ulster, Bangor or Ards hospitals. They are being penalised for having shed all the waste of past years. The budgetary restraints now being imposed will imperil the level of hospital services for the people of North Down. Moreover, apart from clinical services being affected, more nurses and ancillary staff will lose their jobs.

When cuts of £1 million were imposed in previous years, the Eastern health board shut approximately 100 beds. So the proposed cuts—I use the term cuts, as I am speaking about a reduction in the money that is required for the hospitals—will mean about 65 more beds closed. The fact that beds have been closed—and that more will be closed in good and efficient accommodation at the Ulster hospital—is blatant nonsense. The cost of maintaining a patient at the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast is 40 per cent. more than keeping a patient at the Ulster or the Bangor hospital. It is 30 per cent. more expensive to keep a patient in the Belfast City tower block than in the Ulster hospital, the Bangor hospital or the Ards hospital.

It is sheer stupidity for the Eastern health board to force people into the Belfast hospitals when they would prefer to be in either the Bangor or the Ulster hospital. The Ulster hospital is modern and efficient and the doctors, nurses and staff are excellent. Indeed, I was tremendously impressed by a surgeon whom I happened to meet—a Mr. McNeilly—who personified all that is good about the Ulster hospital. I would compare the Ulster and Bangor hospitals with the eight wards in the main corridor in the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

Let me provide not my own opinion but an independent professional opinion. The Department of Health in London set out what is termed an estate code, putting hospitals into different categories—A, B, C and D—according to their physical conditions. The categories are as follows. Category A represents property which

"is in . . . new condition and will perform adequately for a full normal life."

Category B represents property which is

"sound and operationally safe with only minor deterioration."

Category C represents property which is

"operational but major repairs will be needed soon (in three years for buildings)."

Category D is the lowest of them all:

"The property is at serious risk of an imminent crisis."

The Ulster hospital is rated in category A. But where are the eight wards in that main corridor of the Royal Victoria hospital? They are way down at the bottom, in category D. According to the Department of Health,

"the property is at serious risk of an imminent crisis."

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

I should emphasise that the A classification for the Ulster hospital and the D classification for the wards and main corridor of the Royal hospital were given by Mr. Ceri Davies, who submitted a report to the Government a few years ago.

Let me explain what the board now proposes and what is happening. The board says that people in the North Down area, instead of going to the modern Ulster hospital or to the Bangor hospital, must go into Belfast, perhaps ending up in the main corridor of the Royal, which has received a D classification. It is also a hospital where the beds are 40 per cent. more expensive than the beds in the Ulster hospital.

I point out to the Minister—if he does not already know this—that people in North Down do not like travelling to the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast. There is a real danger of terrorist activity. Cars are frequently stolen from the Royal. Moreover, many relatives have great difficulty travelling by public transport—often with many changes—from their homes in North Down to the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

One concept behind the national health service reforms as set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients" was that the money should follow the patient—in order to meet the needs and wishes of the patient. That is not happening in this case. The Eastern health board is turning that round. The patients must follow the money into Belfast. That is something that I will not accept, and that is why I demand a full independent public inquiry into the running of the Eastern health board—in particular into the way in which it manages the North Down area hospital. Nothing less will satisfy the people of North Down—unless, of course, the Government decide to abolish the whole system and replace it by a body of people who are directly elected by the people of Northern Ireland.

Pending a full inquiry, I demand a full and searching examination by the Select Committee on Health. The Eastern board should take no action on budgetary matters until the Select Committee has had an opportunity to cross-examine the officials and others in the Eastern board. There is much more that I would like to say, but in order to leave the Minister a reasonable time in which to reply to the debate, I shall finish by quoting from "better service, better care" which was sent to me and, I think, to almost everyone in Northern Ireland by the Minister. It states:

"Your Health and Social Services Board's new role. They will act on your behalf".—

that certainly does not apply to the Eastern board, which is acting against the interests and wishes of the people of North Down—

"to make sure the health and social services are working for you."

That is a sick joke. The document also states:

"Boards will be funded according to the size of their resident population".

There are 260,000 people in the North Down management area, and they are not getting the money and the beds which such a number of people requires.

The document emphasises allowances for age and health. There are many elderly people in the area. The story that I have to relate about the Eastern board is a sorry one. The people of North Down have no way to appeal for justice other than through me on the Floor of the House. I strongly urge the Minister to respond to the needs and wishes of the people whom I represent.

11.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I am grateful to the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) for clearly setting out the concerns of his constituents about hospital services in their area. The hon. Gentleman has given many years of dedicated service to the people of North Down and Northern Ireland and, indeed, to the United Kingdom as a whole. He is a stout defender of his constituents' access not only to health and personal social services, but to the whole range of public services. Through his activities, such as obtaining this useful Adjournment debate and his parliamentary question which I look forward to answering tomorrow, his reputation as a watchdog of local interests will be further enhanced, if not in the national press, certainly in the columns of the *County Down Spectator* and the *Newtownards Chronicle*.

I should like to reply not only to the points made by the hon. Gentleman in his excellent speech, but to some of the concerns in the area that have arisen over the past few weeks. One of the arguments is that perhaps Bangor hospital should become a new acute hospital. It is worth dwelling on what a modern acute hospital is expected to provide. It must be able to offer high-quality care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year and, as a minimum, it should provide a general medical and surgical specialty, obstetrics and gynaecology, a consultant-led accident and emergency department with adequate supporting staff and facilities; an intensive care unit, a full anaesthetic service and a range of investigative facilities, including pathology and radiology.

Sufficient manpower levels are essential for the maintenance of high-quality services. For consultant medical staff, for example, it is necessary to maintain, when possible, at least three consultants in each specialty, and that means ensuring that their case load is sufficient to justify this investment in highly skilled and experienced staff, together with the facilities and equipment that they require.

To justify a new acute hospital, a minimum population of 100,000 and preferably up to 200,000 is required. Those are the sort of services that are provided by the Ulster hospital. Of course, that does not mean that a great deal more cannot be done to improve the Ulster hospital. I accept what the hon. Gentleman said—that the Ulster needs to be improved—but it makes a tremendous contribution to patient care. Naturally, it could be made more attractive further to enhance the quality of its excellent services. I know that the Eastern health and social services board is finalising its plans for further major investment in the hospital. Obviously we cannot abandon the Ulster hospital and start again. That would be an appalling waste of public money. The ideal solution, from the perspective of the people of North Down and the hon. Gentleman, would be to put it on a set of wheels and trundle it down the road towards Bangor.

However, we have to ask whether the people of Bangor and Ards are denied reasonable access to hospital services. In terms of national and international comparisons, travel times are extremely good, not just to the range of acute hospital services at the Ulster and Ards hospitals, which

are respectively some 10 miles and five miles from Bangor, but to the full range of regional services provided by the major Belfast hospitals, some 15 miles away. Although I accept some of the hon. Gentleman's comments about Belfast, thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people receive excellent treatment there and are happy to go there to receive it. Many parts of Great Britain would envy the range and quality of the health and social services enjoyed by the population served so ably by the hon. Member for North Down.

I shall now deal with the Ulster, North Down and Ards hospitals unit and its financial position. As the title is rather long, I shall refer to it—I hope without causing offence—as the Ulster hospital unit. I do not want that to be regarded as a Freudian slip either. I take this opportunity to clear up the misunderstandings that appear to have arisen over whether financial cuts are being imposed on the unit. The Government are spending £1,166 million on health and personal social services in Northern Ireland this year. This represents an increase of £115 million over 1990-91, so there are no cuts there.

Of this total, the Eastern board is getting £430 million, compared with £390 million last year. That is an increase of £40 million, so there are no cuts there, either. The share of the Ulster unit is almost £37 million, compared with just over £33 million last year. That is not a cut, either. To talk of cuts is destructive and damaging, causes needless fears, and is plainly wrong.

As to beds, I have a sneaking suspicion that most people will agree that we are treating patients, not beds. To take the example of the Ulster hospital, in 1985-86, it treated 15,261 patients, and in 1990-91, 17,033. In other words, if one can treat more patients with fewer beds, that is the best use of the resources, and one that produces the best service.

As happens every year in the Ulster unit, as in every other, the Government expect each board to find cash-releasing cost improvements, which the board retains as a contribution towards the costs of planned developments of services. The costs of pay awards above the Government's cash limits have to be taken into account, as do the costs of inflation above forecasts and various other pressures. These savings do not leave the board. They are not cuts—they are reinvested in the business.

Therefore, that figure, which was set at 1·3 per cent. overall this year, was varied by the Eastern board. I think it right that the five hospital boards should be expected to find slightly more—about 1·6 per cent. of the allocation —and that its four community units should be expected to find slightly less—0·9 per cent. That reflects the fact that the Government expect to see a gradual shift of resources from acute hospitals to community care. In Bangor and Newtonards, I have seen some marvellous examples of community care in the past few months. I have been honoured to visit a great number of such projects.

In the case of the Ulster hospital unit, a cash-releasing cost improvement target of 1·6 per cent. produces £590,000 out of a total budget of nearly £37 million. The unit has had a unit general manager since 1 April 1990, as has every unit in Northern Ireland. These managers are expected to manage. Speaking with the experience of my professional background, I can say that I would expect any manager worth his salt to be able to find 1·6 per cent. savings through greater efficiency while protecting the quality and volume of services that his unit delivers. It is possible to achieve that without affecting any services. For example, better purchasing policies or the better use of resources could avoid any reduction in services. The figure relates to reallocation for factors that will have to be met in any event.

In addition to the figure that I have mentioned, the unit has argued that it needs to find £300,000 to meet an overspend from last year that was caused by a combination of factors. While not accepting the figure in its entirety, the board allowed the unit to retain £328,000 non-recurrently in 1990-91 from the closure of Crawfordsburn hospital to provide time for the unit to take appropriate management action. The unit ended the financial year in a more or less break-even position. On its calculations it still has to find about £300,000 for the current financial year.

The board has again agreed this year to provide between £250,000 and £350,000 on a non-recurrent basis. The exact figure will be determined following discussions between the board and the unit. As I have said, the unit has to find a sum, which it will use within the unit, for extra expenses for this year.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was unable to attend the meeting which the board held last Wednesday with representatives of the district councils of North Down, Ards and Castlereagh. I have read the minutes and I am disturbed by some of the views which were expressed by those in the local community. I read also the report of the meeting in the *Newtownards Chronicle*.

The chairman of the board made it clear at the meeting that there are no proposals to close the Bangor or Ards hospitals. I hope that my explanation of the funding position will further reassure the people of North Down that there are no funding crises at the Ulster hospital unit as have been described in the Ulster press. The Eastern board plans to develop and improve even further the services that are presently provided at the Ulster hospital.

In the longer term, of course, once the further investment has been made at the Ulster, someone might question whether it was necessary or desirable to sustain acute services at both the Ards and Ulster hospitals, which are less than five miles apart. Such factors will have to be considered one day, but any changes will need to be carefully planned. It is entirely right that the issues should be dealt with in consultation with the board, the local people and their representatives.

I cannot comment on the future of the Ulster and Ards hospitals without referring to Bangor hospital. I perceive that there is a considerable gap between the services which people appear to believe are provided and the services that are actually provided. It is not an acute hospital, but it provides many extremely useful services. There is no reduction planned of which I am aware and——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 13 June 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Liverpool, Walton, in the room of Eric Samuel Heffer, Esquire, deceased.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 20 June.

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Tuesday 18 June at Seven o'clock.

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 20 June.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [13 May], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate further adjourned till Thursday 20 June.

Mr. Speaker: The remaining Bills have blocking motions. With the leave of the House, I shall put them together.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 20 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bangor Hospital

1. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will ensure that Bangor hospital will be granted sufficient funds to enable it to provide acute services and other facilities for its catchment area.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): As I explained to the hon. Gentleman during last night's Adjournment debate, acute services for the Bangor area are provided mainly by the Ulster hospital, some 10 miles distant, and by Ards hospital, which is only some five miles away. I am satisfied that they have sufficient funds to maintain their services. I am informed by the Eastern health and social services board that it has no proposals before it at present to alter the services currently provided by Bangor hospital.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is the Minister aware that the people of Bangor will regard his answer as unsatisfactory? A person in Bangor who has a heart attack or is involved in a serious accident cannot be admitted to Bangor hospital, because no accident or emergency facilities are provided there. It is no use saying that it is only 10 miles to the Ulster hospital in Dundonald, because an ambulance or other transport may not be available and serious consequences may result from the delay. I therefore implore the Minister to change his mind.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right —there may be areas where people will have to travel two, three, four or five miles to get emergency treatment, but we are kitting out ambulances with defibrillators. The services at Ards and Ulster are perfectly adequate. I have had no reports that anyone has been put at risk because there is no acute hospital on their doorstep. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the services provided by the management at that hospital unit for people in Bangor are excellent, and I hope that that will continue.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister recognise that some 40 per cent. of the population covered by the Eastern health and social services board live in the North Down and Ards area? Does he recognise that there is growing irritation among people living there at the fact that only 15 per cent. of the funds are spent in their area? Will the hon. Gentleman assure the ever-increasing population in that area—especially in Ards, which is the fastest growing area in Northern Ireland—that Ards hospital will be retained and that there will be further investment in and expansion of services at that hospital?

Mr. Hanley: The right hon. Gentleman is right about the population of North Down. The population of Bangor has increased in recent years from 25,000 to 50,000. It is wrong to say that the money spent within the Ulster, North Down and Ards hospital unit is not in line with population growth. Most of the money spent in that area is for regional services in Belfast. As I said, the people who are provided with services by the Ulster, North Down and Ards hospital unit are well served.

In Northern Ireland as a whole, expenditure this year on health and social services is £1,166 million, an increase of £115 million—that is not cut. The Eastern board will receive £430 million this year—an increase of £40 million —which is well ahead of inflation. The Ulster, North Down and Ards hospitals unit will receive an increase of £4 million, which brings it up to £7 million. I should be grateful, therefore, if there could be no more talk of cuts in that area.

Education and Training

2. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to implement the proposals contained in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The Government are considering how the principles set out in the White Paper, which relates only to England and Wales, may be applied in a way which takes account of the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. An announcement about the future of further education in Northern Ireland was made recently by my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General. This set out the Government's aims and the means proposed to give effect to them. In particular, it proposed new arrangements designed to bring about a better planned and co-ordinated system of further education in the Province.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply. Is it intended to introduce training credit schemes in Northern Ireland, as in England and Wales, as they have an important contribution to make to the training of young people due to their flexibility. Does he agree that such schemes are a good example of the necessary partnership between business and education?

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree that the concept of training credits is excellent because it puts purchasing power into the hands of prospective trainees. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that a pilot scheme to develop a training credit scheme is to be introduced in Northern Ireland in 1992.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Minister aware of the report published today by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, which states that in the past few years funding for the maintained school sector has been 20 or 30 per cent. below that for the state sector? Does he realise that that also has an impact on the prospect of employment for people coming through the voluntary education system? Will he take immediate and urgent action to remedy and redress that position?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, I must say that I have not read the report, probably because it was published only today. I am aware that for historic reasons there was some differential between the funding of schools in the two sectors to which the hon. Gentleman refers. He will know that some years ago the Department of Education started to reverse that trend for precisely the reasons that he outlined. He will also know that the introduction of formula funding in schools in Northern Ireland will continue and perhaps even accelerate that process in order to achieve the end that he desires.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House when he will give some moneys to independent Christian schools in the Province which receive nothing?

Dr. Mawhinney: As I have said to the hon. Gentleman before, that is a matter which I should be most happy to discuss with him, as would my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General, should the hon. Gentleman care to pursue the matter with us.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that a well-educated community with academic and, indeed, national vocational qualifications will help those endeavouring to attract new industry into Northern Ireland? Does he also agree, however, that those promoting the extremely republican MacBride principles in their campaign could damage the very prospects that his proposals seek in raising the level of education throughout Northern Ireland? If implemented and applied to Northern Ireland, such proposals could damage the prospects of young, well-educated Roman Catholics in areas of high unemployment ever finding employment.

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I regret that some people are promoting that campaign in various parts of the United States. If that campaign is designed to achieve fair employment in Northern Ireland, it is unnecessary because there is already strong legislation available to achieve that and also a Government commitment to that end. I record my appreciation of those people in all the political parties in Northern Ireland who have given their time and energy to help boost investment in the Province because Northern Ireland needs jobs, not further restrictions to jobs.

Political Parties (Meetings)

3. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland to discuss the future government of the Province.

4. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his latest talks with the constitutional political parties in the Province.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I plan to meet the four constitutional political parties taking part in the current talks next Monday when, as they indicated last week, they believe that plenary sessions should begin.

In the past few weeks a number of sensitive procedural questions have been resolved and we hope, in conjunction with the Irish Government and in consultation with the other participating parties, to reach agreement before long on the appointment of an independent chairman for the second strand of the talks.

Mr. Shaw: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the delicate and skilful way in which he has achieved this stage of the peace negotiations and discussions. Does he believe that the goodwill that has been established in the first stage will be enhanced in the next critical stage if the Irish Government reveal that they are flexible and can increase their flexibility on articles 2 and 3 of their constitution?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks, but I must advise him that we still have a long way to go. In answer to his second question, the Irish Government have repeatedly made it clear that they will be willing to discuss the matter that he has raised once strand 2 of the current process has been launched.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is terrific respect in virtually all parts of the House for his patience in bringing together the constitutional parties of Northern Ireland, and that there is equal respect for right hon. and hon. Members from different parts of the House who have not been prepared to bow to terrorist threats and who have continued to attend the talks? Are the Government sufficiently flexible to consider re-arrangements or changes to the agreement in due course, provided that they are agreed by all the parties involved in the talks?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks, and not least for the tribute that he paid to other right hon. and hon. Members for their contribution to the process so far. In answer to his question about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the two signatories to the agreement—the British and Irish Governments—have made it clear that they would be prepared to consider a new or more broadly based agreement if such an agreement could be arrived at through direct discussion and negotiation between all the participants in the talks.

Mr. Trimble: Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that the agreement made by the three Ulster party leaders about the first plenary session next Monday will be honoured, and that the right hon. Gentleman will not allow the meeting to be frustrated in any way by the difficulties that he is encountering in his dealings with another Government about finding an independent chairman to replace him at a later stage of the talks?

Mr. Brooke: The announcement on Wednesday last week was made by the leaders of the four parties in Northern Ireland, who stated that they had decided that the plenary talks would commence on Monday 17 June.

Mr. Hume: Does the Secretary of State agree that before hon. Members advise the Secretary of State about the constitutions of other countries it might be wise for them to take a look at their own? Given that it might be regarded as offensive if the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh were the only person who could be President of Ireland, and if the Catholic archbishops of Ireland had seats as of right in the Irish senate, should we not also consider the fact that the only person who can be head of state in this country is the head of a particular church and that the archbishops of a particular church have seats as of right in the House of Lords?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman will recall with the same pleasure as I do that when the Catholic emancipation legislation was going through this Parliament, the then Prime Minister—the Duke of Wellington—was about to propose the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh as Archbishop of Canterbury without realising that there were two.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: While I recognise the need for the talks to make progress, will my right hon. Friend consider whether, in view of the time lost in seeking an impartial chairman for the second stage, flexibility could be shown about the date on which the first stage of the talks is to conclude?

Mr. Brooke: The time allocated for the talks was decided between the parties and announced in my statement of 26 March. Any discussion of what we might do after 16 July when we have the next meeting of the intergovernmental conference should take place when we approach that date.

Mr. McNamara: The House will welcome the statement made by the four party leaders last week, because there was considerable disappointment in Northern Ireland and elsewhere about the difficulties that arose. The statement is therefore welcome and the leaders are to be congratulated on it. Can the Secretary of State inform the House whether in Monday's discussions he hopes to say something about the possibilities of a chairman for the second strand of talks?

Mr. Brooke: It may be helpful if I say a word about the actions taken by the two Governments. Both before and since the four party leaders announced on 5 June the decision to start plenaries next Monday, the two Governments have continued to work actively for the appointment of a chairman. We have been assisted in that respect by names being put forward to us from several quarters, including some of the Northern Ireland parties. I shall meet the Irish Foreign Minister tomorrow to consider the matter, so, although we are not yet in a position to announce a name, the matter is very much in hand.

Mr. Budgen: Since the early 1970s there have been four or five initiatives of this sort, all of which failed. Will my right hon. Friend explain what special circumstances attach to these talks which enable him to believe that they will succeed where others have failed?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has always brought an agreeably sceptical attitude to these matters, but I remind him that one encouragement to all of those taking part in the talks is that we have been engaged in the process in one way or another for 17 months and we have managed to keep everyone involved and concerned that we continue to make progress. Until that ceases to be the case, I for one do not intend to speak in terms of failure.

Sea Communications

5. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what review he has undertaken of the existing sea communication between Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): None, Sir.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister agree that while the advantages of shorter sea crossings are self-evident, there is a strong case to be made, particularly for passenger services, for crossings between ports that are close to the main centres of population? Does he further agree that it would be in the interests of the Northern Ireland economy as well as of my constituency to restore the traditional link between Belfast and Ardrossan? May we have an assurance in principle that if proposals to restore such a service, which I believe may be in the offing, come to the Northern Ireland Office, they will receive a positive response?

Mr. Needham: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: What steps has the Minister taken to investigate the fare structure and cost of travel between Northern Ireland and Scotland, especially in view of the Northern Ireland Consumer Council's complaints about it?

Mr. Needham: I understand the problem to which the hon. Gentleman alludes. Certainly, if it seems that the matter should be looked into, and if there is a restraint of trade we shall consider referring it to the Office of Fair Trading. There are about 100 crossings per week between

the north of Ireland and the mainland, and the north is benefiting most from the economic upturn in trade between the two islands.

Teachers (Redundancies)

6. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers he expects to be made redundant in Northern Ireland at the end of the 1991-92 school year.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no forecasts for redundancies at the end of the 1991-92 school year.

Mr. Ross: Does the Minister accept that I find that comment surprising, because we seem to have redundancies every year and there seems to be a surplus of teachers at present? In the light of the apparent surplus, will he give careful consideration to making additional funds available so that teachers approaching retirement age can retire early, thus making space at the bottom of the scale for enthusiastic young teachers who have not had to go through the turmoil of endless revisions and reforms during the past two years? That enthusiasm would certainly be welcome in many schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amount of money made available for the teaching profession in terms of its numbers, the pupil-teacher ratio and the creation of new teacher posts has been admirable in the past few years. This very year, 100 new primary posts were added to the teaching complement. The pupil-teacher ratio is at an all-time high in Northern Ireland. Although I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, his remarks must be put in a wider context.

General Practitioners

7. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications have been received for general practitioner fund-holding practices.

Mr. Hanley: None, Sir. Applications have not yet been invited, but we are intending to do so by the end of this year.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister kindly tell us the reason for the delay as the management plan said that applications should be in by 1 July? Is that a reflection of the fact that many GPs in Northern Ireland oppose fund-holding status?

Mr. Hanley: Fund-holding status has been well received within Great Britain and the Government remain fully committed to its implementation in Northern Ireland. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, fund-holding will commence a year later than originally planned. The reason for the postponement is to allow the Department and the boards more time to undertake the detailed work involved in the implementation of fund-holding. To be frank, I believe that we can benefit from the opportunity to learn from the experience in Great Britain.

Security

8. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Since I answered a similar question on 2 May, 13 people have been killed as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland. Six were civilians, which number includes three suspected terrorists; three were members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, three were members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and one was a regular soldier.

Those stark figures demonstrate the grim reality of the terrorist threat. What they cannot show is the human heartbreak and misery caused by terrorism—or, indeed, the dedication and sacrifice of members of the security forces in protecting the community.

The Government will not be deflected one iota from our commitment to the maintenance of the rule of law and defence of the democratic process.

Mr. Molyneaux: In view of the predicted and predictable increase in violence which has attended all initiatives in the past 20 years, will the Secretary of State take back to Cabinet the request of the two security chiefs for additional resources to be made available while the initiative completes its run?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious of what underlies the right hon. Gentleman's question. It is a matter of satisfaction to the House that those taking part in the talks have adopted so robust an attitude to the level of terrorist violence during the process of the talks.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General made clear on Tuesday, when speaking to the Police Federation, the process and status involved in the request from the Chief Constable for further additions to the RUC and the reserves—but, given the speculation in the press about other applications, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that. I give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance that such matters are kept under permanent review.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Secretary of State agree that my constituency has suffered in the past few weeks, as other constituencies have done previously? Bearing in mind the mass murder bid in Cookstown in a Protestant housing estate where more than 100 houses were seriously damaged and the serious bid by terrorists in the Coagh district to remove more innocent civilians of my area, will he accept that the House and the entire community owe a great debt of gratitude to members of the security forces for the manner in which they have helped to preserve life in Northern Ireland? Will he also accept that the people of my area, although relieved at the removal of dangerous terrorists, are rather anxious and apprehensive about the onslaught which we know that the IRA will make on our district?

Mr. Brooke: The whole House will join me in sympathising with the hon. Gentleman for what terrorism has meant in his constituency. It is occasionally worth remembering what it means. It means a man gunned down in front of his wife while working on their new home; a father shot in front of his two young sons not even in their teens while a third child, a baby, slept; and a son left to call his grandmother for help. I could go on with a litany of brutal, senseless violence, but that is what terrorism is all about. The hon. Gentleman was right to refer to the threat to a whole community constituted by the bomb which went off recently in a housing estate. I join him in his tribute to the security forces.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Secretary of State accept from me that the violence of terrorists is anything but senseless? It is quite deliberate and has been well orchestrated over the last five and a half years. I remind him that 346 people have died as a result of violence since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that the annual murder rate has risen on average by 34 per cent. during that time. Would he think it unfair of me to observe that Ministers speak about terrorism as though it began a fortnight ago and will all be settled during the next fortnight? Does he realise that 20 years of suffering by the people of Northern Ireland deserves a better response when senior military and police officers in Northern Ireland ask for two extra battalions at this particularly sensitive time? Will he guarantee that those battalions will be provided to meet the request of senior officers?

Mr. Brooke: I do not want in any sense to be combative in my approach to the hon. Gentleman, but I am not sure that he serves the interests of democracy and everything that we in this House hold good by suggesting that the violence of the terrorists is anything other than senseless, for he and I know that the terrorists are not going to win, and in that sense the violence is senseless.

As for the statistics that he quoted in relation to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, I remember intervening in a speech that he was making to ask him to comment, also in terms of the years concerned, on the assistance by way of massive armament resources that the IRA had received from Libya during the same period. He did not return to that matter in that speech.

No one can be more sure than I of what the 20 years have meant. In the context of the hon. Gentleman's question about force reinforcements, he will know as well as I that reinforcements are the more effective when they come as a surprise, as has happened in the past year.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Has the right hon. Gentleman yet received a report from the Chief Constable of the RUC arising from the investigation into irregularities in the investigation that led to prosecutions for the murder of Adrian Carroll? If he has received such a report, is he in a position to send the matter for retrial? If not, will he urge the Chief Constable to produce it expeditiously?

Mr. Brooke: The report from the RUC was delivered to my office in Belfast today. It is a large report and I cannot give a guarantee about the time it will take me to embrace it. Having assured the hon. Gentleman that it has reached me, I confirm, as I have said on previous occasions, that we shall deal as expeditiously as possible with the evidence presented to us.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition support him in his statement about the timing and arrival of force reinforcements in Northern Ireland? That matter must be left to the discretion of the security chiefs and is not an issue which must be booted about abroad. Has the right hon. Gentleman had discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence about the implications of the Army cuts in Northern Ireland? Because it is of special interest to a particularly sensitive area, will he consider issuing a statement on the matter to clarify the possible options for security policy for Northern Ireland resulting from the cuts?

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I have reasonably regular bilateral meetings to discuss security in Northern Ireland and the part that the armed forces play in it. When my right hon. Friend made his initial statement on the programme "Options for Change" in relation to cuts in the armed forces, he made clear in answer to an Opposition question that there would be no implications for the provision of the security forces in Northern Ireland and that they would be maintained at their previous level.

Electricity Privatisation

9. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the process of the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity.

Mr. Needham: Work is progressing to implement the proposals set out in the White Paper.

Mr. Dickens: Since Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom—an important part—are not the people and industry of Northern Ireland entitled to cheaper electricity? Would not the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity provide an opportuntity for a link between Northern Ireland and Scotland, plus an entry into the national grid, so that competition could bring to the people of Northern Ireland and their industry cheap electricity, which has been lacking for years?

Mr. Needham: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that an interconnector between Northern Ireland and Scotland would be of immense benefit to Northern Ireland consumers, both commercial and domestic. It would connect Northern Ireland to the Scottish system; through Scotland, it would be connected to the English system and, through England, to the French system. Therefore, we shall do everything we can to try to promote an interconnector.

Mr. Alton: In answering the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), the Minister did not say whether electricity in Northern Ireland would be cheaper. Will not electricity in Northern Ireland become more expensive as a result of the proposals? Having united every party in Northern Ireland in opposition to his plans, does the Minister accept that it would have been far better to introduce a Bill, which could have been amended and debated in the normal way? The democratic process could then have reflected the views of those who live in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Electricity in Northern Ireland costs, on average, some 30 per cent. more than in the rest of the country, so it is very expensive. One of the reasons is decisions made in the past. The system is not competitive in generation or in any other aspect. The introduction of competition is crucial to ensuring that prices in Northern Ireland are kept as low and as competitive as possible. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's remark that the Government's proposal will raise electricity prices, because the introduction of competition will keep them lower than they would otherwise have been.

Mr. Bellingham: Will there be a possibility, in the medium to long term, of members of the public owning shares in that company?

Mr. Needham: The Government have proposed a transmission, distribution and supply company, which we

hope to be able to float. Most important, we want the people of Northern Ireland to be able to purchase shares in a utility in Northern Ireland, rather than having to participate in share schemes in Scotland or elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Beggs: Has the Minister had an opportunity to refer to column 418 of *Hansard* on 16 May 1991, when the Treasury Minister replied to a question tabled by my hon. Friend the Minister for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross)? He said that it was inconceivable that the employees of Northern Ireland Electricity and the citizens of Northern Ireland would not have an opportunity to buy shares in their own industry. Does the Minister agree with his hon. Friend or is the splitting up of Northern Ireland Electricity causing a split in the Conservative party?

Mr. Needham: So far as the transmission, distribution and supply company is concerned, of course I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Will the Minister confirm that at its meeting on 3 May, the board of Northern Ireland Electricity decided to sack its chief executive? Why did the Government think it necessary to seek a reversal of that decision?

Mr. Needham: The Government did not seek any reversal. The Government do not interfere in Northern Ireland Electricity. The first that I knew of this was an article that I read in the *Belfast Telegraph*, suggesting that the information had been received by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. Perhaps they can explain where they got this information and why they are interfering in the affairs of Northern Ireland Electricity.

Political Talks

10. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the Conservative party in Northern Ireland regarding the talks on the future of the Province.

Mr. Brooke: Since my statement to the House on 26 March 1991, I have received one letter from the Northern Ireland Conservative area council regarding the current talks process. I am grateful for the message of support which it contained.

I have also received three letters from individuals living in Northern Ireland who identified themselves as members of the Conservative party.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend be adopting, as I am sure that he will with his ministerial colleagues, the role of honest, and therefore neutral, broker at the talks? Will he assure Conservatives in Northern Ireland that the Government's view include those expressed recently by our party chairman, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath and Wells, who said that the best way for the people of Northern Ireland to ensure that Northern Ireland Ministers in a Conservative Government reflect their views is for the Northern Ireland electorate to elect them themselves? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he would welcome the election of Conservatives from Northern Ireland to the House to join their colleagues from other parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Brooke: I do not know the context in which the chairman of the Conservative party was speaking. In passing, I should perhaps point out that we have a bishop of Bath and Wells and a Member of Parliament for Bath and a Member of Parliament for Wells. If my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chairman of the Conservative party were to say that he thought that it would be best if every constituency in the kingdom were represented by a Conservative, how could a former chairman possibly disagree?

Mr. William Ross: Since the East Londonderry Conservative Association has sacked its candidate because he agreed with Government policy, would the Secretary of State advise that constitutency association to pick a candidate who agreed with the opinions of the local party or someone who agreed with him?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that in the 650 constituencies that make up this nation, odd things occasionally happen.

Rev. Ian Paisley: As the right hon. Gentleman has made it clear to those attending the talks at Stormont that every bit of representation made will be tabled at the talks and that if delegates want to discuss what is tabled, they can, will he see to it that this large number of letters from the vast amount of support that the Conservative party has in Northern Ireland will be available to us all, so that we can read this interesting information?

Mr. Brooke: The fact that there were only three letters means that the exercise for me in verifying whether they were confidential and for the hon. Gentleman in reading them will not be a major matter for either of us.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Does the Secretary of State agree that any signs of unity among political parties in Northern Ireland should be nurtured? Therefore, should not the Conservative party remove its support for electricity privatisation?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is taking us slightly outside the original question. He draws attention to the fact that political parties in Northern Ireland, other than the Conservative party, have opposed Northern Ireland Electricity privatisation, just as they opposed privatisation of Short Brothers. Given what has happened since that privatisation, they might conceivably regret that they originally opposed it.

Economic Output

12. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the trends in economic output in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Northern Ireland's contribution to United Kingdom gross domestic product has remained broadly stable at just over 2·1 per cent. in the past 10 years, showing that the Province has shared in the United Kingdom's economic growth in the 1980s.

Mr. Jessel: Is not it a most remarkable achievement that, in spite of all the difficulties over the past 10 years, the growth in output in Northern Ireland has kept in line with that in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a tribute to the management and workers of the Province that it has done so.

Political Situation

13. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement regarding the political situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw).

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree that in the course of the past five or six Parliaments, there has been at least one initiative by Labour and by Conservatives when they have been in government? All of them have failed yet, surprisingly, throughout the whole of those 20-odd years, nearly every single opinion poll and survey has shown that the British people want to see the troops out of Northern Ireland—*[Interruption.]* Why is it that among all those political initiatives—most of which have failed—troops out has never been on the agenda?

Mr. Brooke: In answering the hon. Gentleman, I referred him to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover. I now refer him to my answer a moment or two ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). On his point about troops out, the response that he got from the House on this occasion is the answer that he deserves.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Amess: Does my right hon. Friend agree with many of my constituents in Basildon that although the Labour party talked about European reform when it was in power, it achieved nothing? Will my right hon. Friend continue to negotiate in the interests of this country within the European Community, as we have done so successfully in the past?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The budget rebate negotiated by the present Government was very welcome. Nothing whatever in terms of budget rebates was negotiated by the predecessor Government. I believe strongly that it is in our national interest to negotiate within Europe and to reach a conclusion that will enable the whole Community to go forward together. That clearly is the best prize for us and for the Community, and it is what we will seek to achieve.

Mr. Kinnock: Is not it now clear that rising unemployment and deep recession provide the most accurate definition of Majorism?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that I am as concerned about getting unemployment down as anyone else in the House. The way in which to get unemployment down is to ensure that we get on top of inflation, as we are, and that wage demands and settlements begin to come down, as they are, so that the economy can yet again begin to grow. In the period of Conservative Government, there has been a great increase in the number of people in work and increasingly, as inflation falls, that will return to being the case.

Mr. Kinnock: Today's figures are the worst May unemployment figures on record and they are the direct result of the Prime Minister's policies. Faced with that, is he still willing to say to the 2·25 million people who are now without jobs that their unemployment is a price worth paying?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should stop using the unemployed as political pawns—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: He does so not only in the way in which he conducts his politics, but in the way in which he frames his policies. He knows that Labour's job tax would cost more jobs, he knows that the social action programme that Labour supports would cost more jobs, he knows that Labour's strikers' charter would cost more jobs and he knows that Labour's minimum wage would cost more jobs. He is the last person in the House to lecture about unemployment.

Mr. Kinnock: In the six months since the right hon. Gentleman became Prime Minister, unemployment—*[Interruption.]* I know that the Government do not want to hear about unemployment, but in the six months since the right hon. Gentleman became Prime Minister, unemployment in the United Kingdom has gone up by half a million. Is it not obvious that that is the true price of Majorism? It is a price not worth paying.

The Prime Minister: In the six months since I became Prime Minister, the inflation rate has fallen from 10·9 to 6·4 per cent., interest rates have fallen from 15 to 11·5 per cent. and, as the right hon. Gentleman should know, unemployment in his constituency is 38 per cent. lower than it was at the last election.

Q2. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Hicks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, under his leadership, the London economic summit will be an excellent opportunity to give impetus to the political and economic reforms of the Soviet Union?

The Prime Minister: I agree with that proposition. Yesterday I had the opportunity to discuss the reforms in the Soviet Union with the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, and an extremely useful and worthwhile discussion it was. He brought with him a message from President Gorbachev reaffirming his commitment to political and economic reform. I am pleased to be able to say that, after consulting the leaders of the other countries in the Group of Seven, I today invited President Gorbachev to London for discussions with the Group of Seven immediately following the London summit. I also invited him to stay on at the end of the London summit for bilateral discussions. I regret—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very important matter.

The Prime Minister: Most people would have thought it important, but apparently not Opposition Members.

I propose to take the opportunity of discussing with President Gorbachev when he is here, all matters, including those of bilateral interest and the changes in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister recall telling us on Tuesday that he would speak his mind in future? Will he speak his mind today and tell us plainly, when his right hon. Friend the Member for Tewkesbury says that the Prime Minister is opposed—*[Interruption.]* When the right hon. Member for Cirencester—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It was an understandable mistake.

Mr. Ashdown: When the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) says that the Prime Minister is opposed not only to the imposition of a single European currency, but to the principle of a single European currency, is he correct?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) can speak for himself; I have spoken for myself repeatedly on the subject. I have made it crystal clear to the House on a number of occasions that there is no question whatsoever of the imposition of a single currency on the House without the agreement of the House. That is, and remains, the position.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As we move towards closer European co-operation, does my right hon. Friend agree that we all need to improve our skills in languages, perhaps even in double Dutch, so that we can translate the gibberish spoken on Europe by the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not heard any double Dutch—let us deal with the first part of the question.

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree that it would be advisable to improve skills in languages, which is something that I very much hope will happen among our young people. As to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, even if they were translated, I am not sure that they would be worth reading.

Q3. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Since the other major parties seem to agree that the United Kingdom ought to have a single currency and that there should be a federal Europe, does the Prime Minister agree that the Government have a responsibility to inform the citizens of this country of the consequences that would flow from that? Will the Government fulfil that responsibility and ensure that those issues form a major part of their manifesto—and of any referendum that might have to follow?

The Prime Minister: I have spoken precisely about the impact of a single currency on this country on a number of occasions—not least when I set out our own plans for the hard ecu some months ago.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, on his statement yesterday guaranteeing the rights of parents to see their children's schools' examination results? Does not that extend choice—which is at the heart of the Government's reforms, but which is still hotly opposed by Labour?

The Prime Minister: I certainly welcome that announcement, for parents have a right to know that information. In future, they will know it.

Q4. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McAllion: Since the Audit Commission reported this week that it costs the public purse £15 a time to collect an average amount of just £6 from those persons who are liable to pay 20 per cent. of their poll tax, does the Prime Minister agree that, as well as oppressing the poor, the 20 per cent. rule is a waste of scarce public resources? Will he announce this afternoon that he intends to follow the commission's advice and abolish the 20 per cent. contribution?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman produces only a partial comment from the Audit Commission. He neglects to mention that it supports strongly the Government's aim of implementing the new council tax, which meets many of the objectives that the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. Thornton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Government's compulsory competitive tendering legislation is being completely ignored in Liverpool? Is he further aware that the council has admitted to lying about the figures, spending £1 million more on one contract alone than was necessary? That is not the work of Militant Tendency, but of the so-called moderate Labour party.

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure where the so-called moderate Labour party might be these days. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend makes an important point. Councils should use competitive tendering to improve efficiency and to provide the best service to their council taxpayers. As Councillor Keva Coombs said, to some effect:

> "The council's problems are not down to resources. It costs four times more to pick up a piece of litter in Liverpool than it does in other areas."

That is Labour government in practice at local level.

Q5. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: Is the Prime Minister aware that the unemployment statistics released this morning include a number of pub licensees who have been forced out of their public houses, and possibly on to the dole, because they cannot afford the massive rent increases imposed on them by the brewing industry? Will the Prime Minister re-examine the Government's policy towards the brewing industry and the sale of beer, to prevent the wholesale eviction of pub tenants?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will know of the views of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Andy Stewart: It is six years since the coal industry dispute ended. Over that period, the miners of this country have broken their productivity record no fewer than 50 times, and their pay has increased 68 per cent.—making the miners of this country, as defined by the Labour party, super-rich. Will my right hon. Friend congratulate British miners on those achievements, and confirm that he will never, ever, tax their earnings at the rate of 59 per cent. as Labour proposes to do?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly confirm that point to my hon. Friend. I can also confirm for him that we do not regard the super-rich as starting on an income of around £20,000 per year as the Opposition do.

Q6. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Prime Minister aware of the case that I took up two and a half months ago with the Secretary of State for Health of the death of Dr. Robin Senior who started work at Epsom district hospital on 1 February, worked 110 out of the next 138 hours and died on Thursday 7 February? Will the Prime Minister confirm that today's wholly inadequate agreement on a 72-hour working week for junior doctors will not come in until 1997? How many more junior doctors have to die or suffer stress-related illnesses before that is brought down to a sane level?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman's party is pledged to spend no more money on the health service, he is in no position to criticise what is in fact a considerable improvement both for patients and for doctors. As soon as practicable, junior doctors' hours will be reduced to an average of 83 a week, or fewer by the end of 1994. Those working in the busiest areas will have a maximum on-call average of 72 hours a week. That is not the time that they actually work; it is the time that they are on call. It is a substantial reduction and if the hon. Gentleman were not so mealy-mouthed he would welcome it.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 17 JUNE—Committee and remaining stages of the Armed Forces Bill.

Motion on the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order.

TUESDAY 18 JUNE—Opposition Day (14th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Priorities of the Water Industry".

Motion on the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Planning and Compensation Bill *[Lords]*.

THURSDAY 20 JUNE—Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill.

Motion on the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order.

FRIDAY 21 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 24 JUNE—Opposition Day (15th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion in the name of the Liberal Democrats described as "The damaging consequences caused to British interests as a result of Government policy in relation to European monetary union and a single currency".

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

Dr. Cunningham: The Leader of the House made some delphic comments in the debate on the timetable motion on Monday about the Government's decision on the summer recess. Is it possible for the Leader of the House to be more specific about when the House might rise for the summer? I am sure that it would be a great comfort to his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister if that happened sooner rather than later, as well as being a great convenience to many hon. Members, especially those from Scotland where the school holidays come earlier than in England and Wales.

Today again we have, regrettably, seen a record-breaking rise in unemployment, the worst May rise in unemployment since records have been kept. May we have an assurance that soon, preferably before the summer recess, we shall have a debate in Government time on the Government's disastrous unemployment record?

May we be assured by the Leader of the House—if not by the Prime Minister, who, not surprisingly, ducked the question since he used the memorable phrase, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working."—that the Government dissociate themselves from the remark of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that this is a price well worth paying? For people losing their jobs, is not the only price worth paying when the Government lose their jobs and are thrown out of office?

Last week, the Leader of the House promised us an early debate on developments in the European Community and he assured us that that would take place before the imminent European Community summit in Luxembourg. It is a disappointment that that debate will not take place next week. May we have a guarantee today that we will have a debate on those important issues the week after next? May we have an assurance that we will not have to wait for the Prime Minister to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Bruges group, since clearly that is going to take a very long time? Also, may we be assured that, when that debate takes place, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will speak from the Government Front Bench and that we will be able to debate a motion that covers all aspects of developments in European Community affairs?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first question, I should like to be more specific because I appreciate that hon. Members on both sides of the House and from all parts of the United Kingdom would find it helpful to have an early indication of when the House will rise for the summer recess. However, I am afraid that it is not possible to give a specific date at the moment. We have a heavy programme of work to do—we are undertaking a very heavy programme indeed—and the date of rising will be dependent upon our progress. I try to be as helpful as possible, and I will say that I hope that it will not be necessary to sit beyond the week ending 26 July; but I cannot give any undertaking that that will be so.

On the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on unemployment, he will know that that matter can be raised in the debate later today and that there are many occasions on which it can be raised. He will also know that there has been an increase in employment since 1983, and that unemployment is 21 per cent. lower than it was at the time of the last general election. If he is concerned about levels of unemployment and the unemployed, I hope that he will consider dissociating himself from Labour policies, especially that of a national minimum wage, which would undoubtedly greatly increase unemployment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I shall be happy to explain when I have the opportunity to do so in a debate and that is certainly something that we shall continue to do, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment did earlier this week during Employment questions.

I entirely understand the hon. Member for Copeland's argument about a debate on Europe, and I assure him that I hope that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs will be able to open that debate, on the basis that he described —a wide-ranging debate on developments in the European Community. That is part of the point about exact timing, because I am anxious that my right hon. Friend should be able to open the debate. I can confirm that it is the intention to have the debate in the week after next, if that is at all possible. I said that we would wish to have it before the European Council meeting. We are anxious to have a debate, because it would help to expose the many divisions among the Opposition.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, this is an Opposition Day and there is to be a statement after

business questions, so I may have to curtail business questions. I shall allow questions to continue until 4.10 pm and then we shall move on to the next statement. Will hon. Members ask single questions about business next week? I hope that in that way all hon. Members who rise will be called.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. Friend find time for us to debate the fact that the European Commission is trying to make us ban the advertising of cigarettes to reduce consumption, yet is also trying to make us reduce the tax on cigarettes, which would increase consumption? Can he confirm that that is the kind of matter that ought to be decided here at Westminster? Should not the country and the whole House unite around that?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made a very good point about the inconsistency of the policy. He will know that the levels of excise duty that the Commission is suggesting are well below those in this country, and, as he points out, that that arrangement is hostile to our health aims.

My hon. Friend will know the position taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer at ECOFIN. I assure him that his point about the levels of excise duty on tobacco has also been made by my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Following the publication of the report of the Royal Navy board of inquiry investigating the tragic loss of the fishing vessel Antares, will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on its findings and, indeed, on the general question of the safety of fishing vessels at sea?

May I crave your indulgence on this one occasion, Mr. Speaker? A month ago, the Leader of the House promised me that he would consider and reflect on my request for a debate on the beleaguered fish farming industry in Scotland. I wonder whether he has done so.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise a debate on either matter. As I said a few moments ago, we have a heavy programme of work to undertake before the House rises for the summer recess. I fully recognise, however, that both matters are important, and there are other ways in which the hon. Lady can raise them in the House.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): In the business statement, my right hon. Friend announced three occasions next week on which the House will be discussing private legislation. How much longer are we to proceed with this farcical, obsolete Victorian system?

Mr. MacGregor: Actually, I think that it was two occasions.

My hon. Friend knows that I entirely sympathise with the point that he has made. We are taking action on the matter, as fast as is possible within the rules of the House. In recent weeks, we have already passed Standing Orders that will accelerate the passage of private Bill business next Session.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has given his response to the report that deals with the implementation of the various road, rail and other undertakings that form so much of private Bill procedure. As I have told the House before, we intend to introduce the legislation as soon as we can. That will make a considerable difference to the problem that my hon. Friend has very fairly raised.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Will the Foreign Secretary be ready next week to make a full statement on the position in the middle east? We have not had a debate on the Gulf since before the bombing began in January. Since then, reports from the United States suggest that as many as 200,000 civilians may have been killed. According to the Harvard medical report, 170,000 babies' lives will be at risk from cholera and dysentery over the next 12 months. The Palestinians have achieved no satisfactory solution to their demands; the Kurds are insecure; Saddam is still there—and there is to be a victory parade this week. Meanwhile, the House has not assessed the ghastly ecological and human damage done by the conflict. When may we do so?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not wish to comment on all the points that the right hon. Gentleman has made. That would be inappropriate during business questions. I can tell him, however, that I hope to find an opportunity to arrange a debate on the Kurds before long. I shall report what the right hon. Gentleman has said to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, but Government time will be very limited in the next few weeks.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 776, which has been signed by more than 200 hon. Members on a cross-party basis?

[That this House, conscious of the fact that real care for the men and women of our armed forces has enabled our country to rely, even to the point of ultimate sacrifice, upon their loyalty, steadfastness and efficiency in times of grave national threat, is astounded to note that, when digging a trench during an official Army exercise in Canada in July 1989, three men of the Grenadier Guards (Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey) detonated a six year old unexploded shell which not only rendered them limbless but caused them such grievous wounds that Mr. Ray and Mr. Povey are still, after almost two years, in receipt of hospital treatment; notes that the Ministry of Defence find themselves unable, on the grounds of unattributable negligence, to pay compensation; and calls upon the Prime Minister to review this case personally and to ensure that, regardless of the possible legal responsibility of some unknown nation who failed to "clear" the shell some six years previously, Her Majesty's Government is seen to follow truly a policy that shows an appreciation of human understanding, human dignity and the value of a human life on earth by awarding generous compensation and a return of the accumulated legal costs to these youthful British Grenadiers.]

Last week, there were no fewer than three requests for a debate on this matter, but my right hon. Friend has not announced one today. I remind him that the motion refers to three Grenadier guardsmen who were ordered to dig a trench in a live firing exercise area in Canada in 1989. As a result of their striking an unexploded shell, the legs of all three were blown off. The board of inquiry report has not been made available to anyone except the Government.

How can a Minister blandly say that no one is to blame, when those guardsmen as yet have had no chance of

[Mr. John Browne]

proving negligence? Will my right hon. Friend ask the Prime Minister, when he investigates the case, to view it with common sense, common decency and compassion?

Mr. MacGregor: As I said last week in response to my hon. Friend when he raised this point, the House sympathises fully with the three young men involved. At this stage, however, I can add nothing to what I said last week on the background to this unfortunate case.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that those who have heard about the case —my constituent, Sean Povey, who is only 21, was one of those injured—cannot understand why no compensation has been given? Obviously, there has been much publicity about this matter in the west midlands. The three soldiers were carrying out their duties on a training exercise in Canada. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces has confirmed that they were not to blame. No one can understand how those soldiers can be crippled for life, yet the Ministry of Defence will not pay a penny of compensation.

I asked the Prime Minister whether he would receive a deputation of hon. Members. Like the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), I ask for some understanding, sympathy and compassion for the three young men. They were proud to join the Army and to serve their country, but, they were seriously injured for life through no fault of theirs and are being treated in a disgraceful way.

Mr. MacGregor: I am answering business questions about when statements can be made and debates can be held in the House. I have already given in previous weeks the Government's position on payments to those unfortunate gentlemen. I have discussed this matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who is well aware of the concern in the House about this matter. However, I have nothing to add.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): May we have a debate as soon as possible on sartorial standards in the House so that we can discuss recent revelations in *The Independent* that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are going through a process known as "folletting" to smarten them up? There are reports that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has refused to be folletted on the ground that he cannot be improved any further.

Although the hon. Gentleman may have a point, in that it would be difficult to know what could be done to help him, surely we need to discuss the fact that no amount of folletting, no amount of flashy suits and no amount of tacky plastic red roses can disguise the truth—that the Labour party is still wedded to policies of higher taxes, nationalisation, caving in to public sector unions, led by a——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That point could well be made in a debate, but I think that that is enough, during business questions.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Labour party is led by a wittering Welsh windbag who recently took 220 words to describe the fact that Labour has no policy on Europe.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called the hon. Member early, but he has taken up time available to his colleagues. Those are the sorts of points which, if they need to be made at all, should be made in a debate.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not wish to comment on image questions—my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has made his points on that. There will be many opportunities in the House in future, including today, to expose the dangers and damage of the Labour party's policies which lie beneath the glossy image.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the position of ex-service men who are disabled by alleged negligence is far worse than was described earlier? Hundreds of ex-service men campaigned for the abolition of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, which prevented them from suing for negligence, but, when the law was changed, they were denied the right to sue because the Government would not allow them to do so and would not give them compensation. May we have a statement next week to correct this terrible injustice?

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that I am right in saying that that matter has been dealt with often in the House, so I cannot promise the right hon. Gentleman a statement on it next week.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May we have an early debate on the interesting answer given by the Leader of the Opposition on the subject of European monetary union, not on the difficult question, which was extremely embarrassing for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), as to whether the House agreed with it, but on the slightly less difficult although still complex issue of whether the House understood it?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that I expect that there will be a debate on European issues. There is also a Supply day in the name of the Liberal Democrats a week on Monday when, I have no doubt, that the issue can be raised. The Leader of the Opposition never knowingly under-phases, and his answer on that particular occasion must be a candidate for the longest and emptiest sentence of the decade. I believe that it covered up the enormous divisions within the Opposition on these issues.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Leader of the House will no doubt recall that during business questions last week he told my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) that he would consider the possibility of the Scottish Grand Committee meeting in Edinburgh at least once during its current series of debates. What investigations has the right hon. Gentleman conducted into the matter, with whom has he discussed it, and what conclusion has he reached?

Mr. MacGregor: I have not completed my investigations, but I shall write to the hon. Lady when I have done so.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): My right hon. Friend will know that my constituency contains one of the major Royal Ordnance factory units and that, tragically for the families involved, about 500 people are being made redundant. The unit makes guns of all types, especially for British tanks. If my right hon.

Friend cannot allow a debate specifically on the effect of defence procurement on the defence industry, will he advise whether it will be possible to raise that issue in next Monday's debate?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. He will recognise that what is happening is part of the changing scene in defence generally, which has many positive aspects as well as the difficulty that he mentioned. I do not think that it would be appropriate for that issue to be raised during the debate on the Bill on Monday, but I hope that before the House rises for the recess it will be possible to have further debates on defence matters when that issue could be raised.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Will the Leader of the House alert the Secretary of State for Employment to the fact that he might have to make a statement to the House very soon—perhaps next week—about an impending strike at Heathrow by employees of American Airlines, which intends to begin operating from Heathrow with the permission of the Government? American Airlines is insisting that employees give up their membership of various trade unions. Will the Secretary of State for Employment reaffirm his belief that whether workers are members of a trade union is a decision that should be left to them, and not forced upon them by a reactionary employer such as American Airlines?

Mr. MacGregor: I know nothing of the case in point, but I do not think that it is likely to be suitable for a statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. However, I shall draw the matter to his attention.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Following the excellent speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science about teaching standards, will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate in the House on the teaching and use of the English language? I am sure that he will agree that the Government would not want to give the message that a good example to follow would be that of the Leader of the Opposition and the use of 100 or 200-word sentences, one after the other, which can hardly be described as good style.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said earlier, that especially long sentence was absolutely incomprehensible and perhaps deliberately so, either to confuse everyone about the Labour party's policy or because the Leader of the Opposition did not understand the issue. However, I do not think that it would be an appropriate issue for discussion in an education debate—for example, that due to be held on the order next Tuesday. I share my hon. Friend's view about teaching standards, and I think that it would be more appropriate for discussion during a debate on education rather than during a debate on European monetary union.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to make a statement about why television detector vans visited a hospital in my constituency and about why, on the following day, its long-term patients were advised that they would have to pay £77 for a television licence? Surely the Leader of the House can arrange for a statement on such a despicable act, which is immoral and a crime against long-term patients in the national health service?

Mr. MacGregor: I know nothing about the incident that the hon. Gentleman has raised, but there are other ways in which he can raise the matter in the House instead of by way of a statement from the Home Secretary.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): May I remind my right hon. Friend that four weeks ago today at business questions I raised with him the fact that the parents and children who were the innocent victims of the Cleveland child sex abuse case have not received a penny piece in compensation? Then, it was over six months since the incident; now it is over seven months. During those four weeks, absolutely nothing has happened; no money has changed hands, and the people concerned have been left as they were. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is sympathetic and would, I believe, be prepared to make a statement. I hope, however, that that will not be necessary and that compensation will be paid straight away.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall raise that point again with my hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Although, of course, the Gulf war was a great American military victory, albeit against somewhat minimal opposition, it has since become quite clear that, politically, it was an unmitigated and unnecessary disaster in view of the fact that Saddam Hussein is still safely ensconced and that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, Kurds and Shias have been killed, the latter in response to a call to revolt by President Bush. In view of the immense ecological damage that has been caused and the fact that the war has led and will lead to a growth in Islamic fundamentalism, may we have a chance to debate this issue in the House shortly to cover the whole range of disasters that arose from that appalling political misjudgment?

Mr. MacGregor: The vast majority of hon. Members take the view that the consequences of not repelling the forces of Saddam Hussein and Iraq in the invasion would have been infinitely greater than some of the problems that have arisen from doing so. I am sure that that is the view of the vast majority of hon. Members and of people throughout the country.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I am sure that my right hon. Friend has observed the success of early-day motion 667, entitled, "Disclosure of criminal convictions for new applicants for taxi driver's licences".

[That this House notes with grave concern the findings of a survey by the National Association of Taxi and Private Hire Licensing and Enforcement Officers which revealed that in the 136 councils that replied 486 criminal records had actually been discovered in a 18 month period, none of which had initially been declared during the interviews which took place under the provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 which required a district council not to grant a licence unless they are satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a taxi driver's licence; calls upon the Home Office, the Department of Transport and the Association of Chief Police Officers to co-operate in the release of past criminal records of all new

[Mr. James Hill]

applicants to the chairmen of district licensing committees in a confidential file, so as to prevent any recurrence of what occurred in Southampton where a licence was given to a convicted rapist; and calls for a similar system to be introduced to all district councils in the United Kingdom as that practised in London where the Metropolitan Police have access to criminal records when determining applications for Hackney carriage drivers' licences.]

My right hon. Friend will not be aware, however, that practically every local authority in this country is demanding action on this emotive issue, which arouses fear about the dangers of such licensing. Knowing that I have received full support for my early-day motion, which has received more than 160 signatures, will my right hon. Friend make a genuine attempt to provide time, perhaps next week, for us to discuss this emotive issue, with the introduction of legislation in the not-too-distant future?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend will recognise, I cannot comment on legislation for future legislative programmes. That is done in the Queen's Speech. My hon. Friend knows that it is not possible to introduce such legislation in this Session, given that we already have a crowded programme and that the Session does not have long to run.

On the subject raised in early-day motion 667, the Home Office has recently discussed with the Association of Chief Police Officers whether the police could take on that task. The question will be reconsidered in the light of the forthcoming report from the Home Office on the scrutiny of criminal records.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The people of Northern Ireland and its politicians have been remarkably patient and have been waiting for many weeks for a statement to be made in the House on the Larry Goodman fiasco, which has affected the people of Northern Ireland, its farming community and its banks. When will the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland make a statement—or is he keeping quiet until the investigations in the Republic of Ireland have been concluded?

Mr. MacGregor: I have no information on that matter, but I shall discuss it again with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the need for performance-related pay in the public sector? Such a debate is especially important to the people of Liverpool who are faced with the failure of their council workers to clear litter. There are 12,000 tonnes of litter covering the streets of Liverpool, creating a danger of disease and stench, and there is a danger of rats covering the place. Indeed, those are exactly the criteria that we remember from the last months of the Labour Government.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right in believing that it is clear that the people of Liverpool are suffering in a situation which is rapidly sliding into anarchy and is reminiscent of the 1970s. There will be several opportunities in the coming weeks to draw attention to those matters and to remind people that Liverpool is a good example of a Labour administration in practice.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The Leader of the House will recall that, during business questions last week the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) requested an early debate on regional government, presumably for the spurious reason that northern Tories feel that there is some electoral advantage in opposing it. If regional government is not the subject of intense debate over northern breakfast tables, it is precisely because there has not been sufficient public airing of the matter. The northern group of Labour Members of Parliament would also welcome a debate. We join the hon. Member for Stockton, South in calling for an early debate on regional government in Government time.

Mr. MacGregor: There will be opportunities to debate many matters which affect the northern region, including one this afternoon. Immediately after business questions there is to be a statement which affects a particular part of the north-west. It is not likely that Government time will be found for a general debate on regional government before the summer recess. Of course, it is always open to other parties to raise the matter if they regard it as a priority.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is showing his deep concern for the health service by attending and addressing the Confederation of Health Service Employees conference in Blackpool? May we have an early opportunity for him to report back to the House on the little deals that he has done with COHSE, and, I expect, some of its friends in the National Union of Public Employees, what strikes he will support and, probably most importantly, the effects of the minimum wage and the £500 million that it will cost the health service? After all, as my right hon. Friend knows, there will be no more money for the health service under Labour. We want to know how many more beds the hon. Member for Livingston would close as a result of deals with trade unionists.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a fair point about the disparity between some aspects of Labour policy on the health service and the fact that the party is committed not to increase expenditure on it. There will be several opportunities to discuss those matters in the House in the coming months.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an early debate on the shortage of playing facilities for young children? Is the Leader of the House aware that a petition will be launched in Leicester tomorrow—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may think that the matter is funny, but the parents of children who do not have playing facilities regard it as very serious indeed. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the process of learning starts early and that the Government's education cuts should not affect the education of very young children, as they do now?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that there has been a considerable increase in education expenditure in recent years, and that is to the advantage of the people of Leicester as well as of people everywhere else. The hon. and learned Gentleman will have to find his own opportunities for a specific debate on the matter that he raises.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that several of his colleagues are disappointed that there will not be a debate next week on the subject of Merseyside, because we could bring out some of the good news from that region, such as the much increased productivity on the docks following the abolition of the dock labour scheme? Does he agree that it is sad that, in a forthcoming contest, neither of the socialist candidates is likely to pay any attention to the good stories which are coming from that region?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I only wish that some of the actions taken by the local council which tend to hit the headlines would be reversed so that it was possible to concentrate on the good news. There will be an opportunity in the debate this afternoon and on several other occasions to make such points.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House find time for an urgent debate on housing? Why should the tenants of Calderdale subsidise the inefficient and callous Tory Westminster council which is trying to ship homelessness to Calderdale because it has sold almost all its council houses, refuses to build any more and does not recognise that the Government have caused homelessness everywhere in the country? There is no way that Calderdale can take any more homeless. At present it has 35 homeless families and many hundreds of single people waiting to be housed. May we have an urgent debate on the housing crisis that has been caused by the Government?

Mr. MacGregor: In view of the time, I do not believe it would be right for me to consider the substance of the hon. Lady's remarks, but I can tell her that I do not believe that there will be an opportunity to debate the matter in Government time.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if there was a city in the United Kingdom where local services had completely broken down due to the inefficiency and incompetence of the so-called moderate Labour council, the people of that city and others would expect the House to debate the matter next week? If so, should we not have a debate on Liverpool and the disgraceful state of affairs in that city?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that it would be extremely enlightening because it would remind people what life is like under a socialist administration. The debate should be not only on Liverpool, but on other places such as Lambeth where the schools are in chaos because of mismanagement. There are opportunities that arise not solely in Government time for a debate, so it may be possible in the near future to discuss such matters.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): As the Leader of the House is the Minister responsible for business in the House, will he find time to make a statement on the serious erosion of parliamentary democracy arising from Ministers' practice of referring parliamentary questions to the chief executives of next steps agencies to be answered? That ensures that the answers do not appear in *Hansard* and are not available to hon. Members and the public.

Mr. MacGregor: In such cases the letters of response from the chief executives are available in the Library and are available to the public through the Public Information Office. It is often possible to convey more information in a letter than in a parliamentary answer.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I draw the attention of the House to early-day motion 946 in my name.

[That this House notes that community charge payers in the Borough of Dartford are each having to pay over £14 extra on their current community charge bills, largely as a result of the "can't pay, won't pay" campaign led by the left-wing member of the Dartford Borough Council, Councillor Mike Crosby, of 31 The Grove, Swanscombe, Kent DA10 0AD; notes that the Director of Finance for Dartford Borough Council has estimated the ultimate shortfall as a result of non-payment to be £600,000, which has to be borne by those who paid on time; urges Councillor Crosby to apologise to the people of Dartford and to resign immediately from public life; and further, urgently requests the National Executive of the Labour Party to hold an inquiry into Councillor Crosby's political and public conduct with a view to his expulsion from the Labour Party.]

Is my right hon. Friend aware that many thousands of people in Dartford and many millions of people in the country are paying a much higher community charge in the current financial year as a result of the "can't pay, won't pay" campaign that is supported and led by members of the Labour party? Will he arrange for an early debate on this subject so that we can bring to the attention of the British people the fact that a number of Labour Members and many hundreds of Labour councillors and supporters have not paid their community charge and are encouraging many thousands of decent people to break the law?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I do not know whether we can find time to debate this issue next week, but it has been frequently raised in the House. People in authority, such as councillors, should not only meet their payments; it is even worse when they urge others not to do so, particularly when that transfers the cost of the payment to other law-abiding people in their area, many of whom will be earning considerably less money. I am sure that most hon. Members would condemn that practice and hope that councillors would not engage in such disgraceful activities.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): This week, the Leader of the House allowed the proceedings on the Dangerous Dogs Bill to go into the early hours of the morning. During the business statement on Monday, the right hon. Gentleman said that he wanted the Bill back here before we rose for the recess. Will he use his good offices to tell those in the other place that the people are extremely concerned and want the legislation in place now?

Mr. MacGregor: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman, who was assiduous on Monday in making that point. I am sure that he spoke for the vast majority of people.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I am determined to do exactly as he asks, and I know that my noble Friend in another place will endeavour to do so as well. That is one of the factors that affect the summer recess date. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern to see that the Dangerous Dogs Bill should be on the statute book before the summer recess.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When considering the Opposition's request for an early debate on unemployment, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the concern felt in Scotland, particularly by Scots who support Labour—the party of devolution—about decisions made in London at Walworth road that are creating unemployment in Scotland?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend speaks with authority on the decisions that may also be causing unemployment. The decisions made by Labour Members about the kind of policies that they would pursue, if they ever got the chance, would greatly increase the numbers of unemployed people in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Carr (Ribble Valley): In the light of the Carlton Club education committee finding that there is evidence of a lack of Government policy towards nursery education, and the results of a Liberal Democrat survey showing that 54 per cent. of local authorities wish to expand nursery education but cannot, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to grant time for a debate in Government time on nursery education?

Mr. MacGregor: The number of nursery education places has increased considerably in the past 10 years. It is a matter of priorities and resources. I note that the Liberal Democrats' statement would involve considerable extra expenditure, as would their policies on a whole range of matters. They must make their decisions, as we do, on priorities and the tax burden involved.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I have not been able to call the Opposition Members who are now standing. This is an Opposition Supply day, and if I were to call them all, it would take time out of it.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the next statement first.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point I wish to raise is on this very matter.

Mr. Speaker: It may be. I will take it after the statement.

Cumbria (Special Support)

4.12 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about special support measures that the Government propose to make available for Cumbria.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Both hon. Members who are standing know that we take points of order in their proper place, which is after statements.

Mr. Madden: But the Leader of the House is leaving the Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: He may come back.

Mr. Lilley: Barrow and West Cumbria suffer from a unique combination of geographical isolation and heavy dependence on single employers. Barrow is overwhelmingly dependent on the Vickers shipyard, which has recently announced a further 5,000 to 6,000 job losses over the next three years. The Copeland area is heavily dependent on employment at the major British Nuclear Fuels construction project, which is now nearing completion, bringing an end to about 5,000 local construction jobs over the next two years.

There is therefore an urgent need to help the area both to attract and to generate new jobs. Following consultations locally, my Department, together with a number of the local authorities and regional development agencies, funded a study to assess Cumbria's economic circumstances and prospects.

We received the report yesterday. It concluded that there were great strengths in the area, in particular the highly skilled local work force, but also serious weaknesses, notably in communications and in the availability of modern factory and commercial premises. The Government will, of course, be studying the report in detail, but in the meantime we intend to set in hand immediately many of the report's recommendations.

I am therefore proposing a package of new support measures. First, I am asking English Industrial Estates to undertake a major programme to provide factories and work space in the Barrow and Whitehaven travel-to-work areas. This will make modern premises available to house local firms and to attract new enterprises into the area. It will also make serviced sites available for private developers.

We expect the programme to provide over 300,000 sq ft of floor space and to make available about 30 acres of serviced land, at a cost of up to £15 million over three years.

Secondly, we are setting up a locally based action team to help projects stimuate new business activity in Furness and West Cumbria. The team, which began work on 1 July, will work closely with local agencies to ensure that our action is co-ordinated effectively with other local initiatives and to bring about effective delivery and promotion of Government and European programmes. The action team must be able to act and respond quickly.

We are therefore making available to it funds of up to £1 million to be used to help projects that would not otherwise have gone ahead.

Thirdly, a high-level co-ordinating group is being established at regional level between Government Departments. This group will ensure that all Departments' programmes to tackle the area's problems are co-ordinated to best effect. It will monitor and evaluate the support programmes available locally and will liaise closely with other agencies. The group will provide further advice on the consultant's report and the Government will then see if other help for the area, within current programmes, is appropriate and feasible.

I have already ensured that details of the skills and technology available in the area, as well as the new factory building programme, are passed on to the Invest in Britain Bureau. It, in turn, will pass this information on to potential inward investors.

In addition to help from DTI, a number of Government initiatives are planned. The Department of Transport has a £32 million programme of works for the strategically important A590 in south Cumbria. Of more specific relevance to Barrow is the £12·5 million A590 Dalton bypass, which will be a key element in improving communications between Barrow and the M6. It is also proposed to improve the trunk road that will link Barrow to the bypass.

As for derelict land, the Department of the Environment is discussing with local councils further opportunities for land reclamation and noise and environmental improvements, with a view to improving the area's attractiveness to inward investors. The Rural Development Commission is also giving priority under its programmes and has invested over £1·25 million in Westlake science park and Moresby industrial park. To help the local work force acquire skills for future employment, the Cumbria TEC has been allocated an extra £1 million this year.

I am glad to say that the European Commission has recognised the difficulties facing west Cumbria, which is now eligible for European regional funds. We have recently submitted an application for Barrow to receive £2 million funding from the EC's PERIFRA programme. I am seeking clearance from the Commission for both the English Industrial Estates programme and the action team expenditure that I described earlier.

Cumbria faces severe industrial and employment difficulties over the next few years. The Government recognise that and are not prepared to let the region fall into decline. We shall consider further action in the light of the consultants' report but, in the meantime, the measures that I have announced today will provide an immediate response to the area's needs. They demonstrate the Government's faith in the local community and amount to a unique package of support to combat a unique combination of problems. They will provide support fast and effectively, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): We welcome the Government's recognition of the severe problems faced by Barrow and the whole of Cumbria. We also welcome the statement about the need for special measures and the Government's new view that what the Minister calls "special and support measures" are needed in areas of economic change and difficulty.

The Minister said that the programme by English Industrial Estates will cost £15 million over three years. Is that new money for regional policy from the contingency fund, meaning that his Department's budget is now increased by £15 million over three years, or has the money simply been taken from the Department's other budgets? Will he confirm that his contribution to the second central proposal—a locally based action team—is, as I have been told this afternoon, composed of two civil servants? If so, that is a generous definition of the term "team". Will the Minister confirm that his third central proposal, a high-level interdepartmental team, has already been set up and has been working for some weeks? As for the other measures from other parts of Government, will the Secretary of State confirm that each of them, including the transport programmes, have already been announced by other Departments, in some cases, many months ago?

The Secretary of State spoke of more help for Cumbria TEC, but will he confirm that, contrary to the impression he gave, Cumbria TEC is losing 6,000 training weeks this year, even as unemployment in the north-west worsens by 1,000 a week? Furthermore, its budget is to be cut from £18 million to just over £16 million—a 9 per cent. cut even after taking into account the £1 million that the Secretary of State mentioned, which was given in March.

If the Secretary of State wants to help Copeland, why are the Government delaying application for European regional development fund funding that has already been approved by the regional commissioner?

What does the statement mean for regional policy in the north and the rest of the country? Does it mean that the Secretary of State now believes in regional policy? Does it mean that he dissociates himself from the remarks in the pamphlet from the Minister responsible for regional policy and the No Turning Back group, of which he is a member, in which it is said that regional policy is a phoney activity for Government? If the Minister now recognises the problems for Cumbria, is he prepared to recognise the problems of other parts of the country facing the worst recession anywhere in Europe?

Is it not the case that, having cut regional aid in the north-west by 67 per cent. over the past 12 years, the Secretary of State is planning to cut it this year, next year and the year after in all parts of the country? Is he prepared to reverse that policy and consider the creation of regional development agencies, as advocated by the House of Lords Committee? Is he aware that, if he is to deal with the problems of the country county by county or region by region in announcements to the House, as he has set a precedent for doing today, hon. Members on both sides of the House will be expecting further statements on the problems of the midlands, of the rest of the north, of the south-east, of the south-west and of other areas? They will all want more commitment to genuine new measures and to new funds than we have seen today.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman welcomed the statement, albeit rather grudgingly. He asked about the English Industrial Estates money. That money comes from its budget—that is what the budget is for. As to the action team, the people whom the hon. Gentleman mentioned will be joined by another from the local TEC, and they will be working with all the local agencies. Their function is to mobilise those local agencies, co-ordinate their initiative and make sure that the combined effect is greater than the sum of the parts.

[Mr. Lilley]

The hon. Gentleman claimed that all the measures in my statement have been announced before, but that is not the case. The Dalton bypass announcement has not yet been made.

As to Cumbria TEC, it is clearly up to the TEC itself to decide how its money is to be deployed. We believe in devolving responsibility as far as possible to such local initiatives.

The hon. Gentleman said that the European regional development fund application had been delayed, but it has now gone ahead.

The hon. Gentleman asked, in rather a party political way, whether we believe in regional policy. Yes, we do, but we believe in focused, targeted regional policy, not the indiscriminate, wasteful and ineffective policies pursued to so little effect by the last Labour Government. There is no question of making statements about every region, county or city. The hon. Gentleman should surely be able to recognise the unique problems of the area, such as isolation and the dependency on two employers. They call forward this response, which is an appropriate one.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): It is sad that the Labour Opposition have neither the grace nor the stature to recognise and accept good news when they hear it. On behalf of my constituents, I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the measures that he has announced. They are good news for Barrow, and his statement is an excellent example of how the machinery of government can work quickly and effectively. The job losses in the shipyards in Barrow were announced on 20 March. On 25 March, the Under-Secretary visited my constituency. A report was commissioned, and a little over two months later, we have this statement.

I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would clarify several points. First, will he ensure that the action team to be based in Barrow has seconded to it someone with experience of planning procedures and of the compass of machinery of local government? Secondly, can he at this stage give some apportionment of the £15 million allocated to English Industrial Estates as it relates to Barrow and to Whitehaven? Thirdly, will he confirm that Barrow's application to the European Commission for the PERIFRA programme is ranked No. 1 in the Government's submission?

Fourthly, will my right hon. Friend recognise that inward investment, if it is to be successful, requires good communications, especially roads? Is he aware that the A590, the only trunk road linking Barrow with the M6 over one hour's drive away, at one stage literally goes through a farmyard? Can he elaborate on the proposals to improve the A590? Can he also clarify his reference to the Dalton bypass, which was first requested by the then local council 54 years ago, in 1937?

Finally, may I place on record my deep appreciation of my right hon. Friend's role in co-ordinating the initiative and especially of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Industry and Consumer Affairs in his role as regional Minister? I am especially grateful to him.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his thanks and for his especially well deserved tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. I want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) for his diligence and persistence on behalf of his constituents and those in neighbouring areas. He has persisted with great effect and he has left no stone unturned. I hope that he and his constituents recognise that the Government, as he said, have endeavoured to respond as speedily as possible.

My hon. Friend asked whether someone with experience of planning and all the problems that that poses locally would be in the team. I can assure him that a senior official with at least 10 years' experience of those problems will be in the team. I agree that that is extremely important in getting things moving.

My hon. Friend asked about the apportionment of the £15 million English Industrial Estates money between his constituency and neighbouring areas. We expect that the apportionment will be roughly 50:50, although that will depend very much on the final judgment of English Industrial Estates. My hon. Friend also asked about the ranking of PERIFRA applications. There are a number of applications and we will pursue them all as hard as we can —not least that in his constituency. There is no specific ranking.

My hon. Friend was right to say that good communications are the key to an area that is geographically so isolated. We have recognised that. The Dalton bypass will go out to tender in August and I hope that construction can begin this September. I know that there are other improvements to be made of the roads in the area. That is catered for in part by the measures that I mentioned in my statement.

My hon. Friend knows that his constituents largely depend for their livelihood on constructing nuclear submarines. He is aware, as I am, that the problems would be manifoldly worse if we had a Labour Government who cancelled the fourth Trident submarine. It was significant that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), did not mention that. I call on him to clarify whether Labour would—as I believe it would—cancel the fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Does the Secretary of State realise that Carlisle is in Cumbria? He has not mentioned my constituency, and there will be a great disappointment among the 3,500 people on the dole there. Will he join me in congratulating Barrow council and Cumbria county council on their efforts in lobbying him? May I congratulate the Secretary of State personally on the massive U-turn that he has made? He used to be known as a dry Minister; he is now obviously very wet. Many of us suspect that this is all to do with saving the job of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) and not with helping the unemployed in the county.

The Minister must be aware that the new money announced today is old money and Cumbria TEC is abandoning its employment training schemes since the money is not available because the Minister cut it. It is obvious that the Minister has been on the road to Damascus, but has he been on the road to Barrow lately? We have had a Conservative Government for 12 years, but they have done nothing about the Dalton bypass. Now that it looks as though we are coming up to a general election, they talk about getting the work started, but it is too little, too late, not only for Barrow, but for Cumbria. How many jobs does the Minister plan to create through the plans announced today?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of his constituency. If it were appropriate, I would echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), to whom the primary congratulations are due.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) made some strange remarks about this being a wet or interventionist measure. There is no question of us going into the business of picking winners. We shall not establish a quango such as the defence diversification agency which the Labour party proposes, but of which it is so ashamed that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) did not mention it.

An extra £1 million has been allocated to TECs. That is a substantial sum for the district and meets the criticism of the hon. Member for Carlisle. The hon. Gentleman said that the action was too little, too late; I received the report from the consultants yesterday, and I am acting today.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement is most welcome? He deserves the warmest congratulations for what he has done so quickly and should not be subject to carping criticism from the Labour party.

Will my right hon. Friend look again at the communication problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) referred? Will he consider what he can do to press for improvements to the A590, particularly at High Newton, because that bit of the road is likely to become a major bottleneck? Will he arrange meetings with British Rail to see what can be done to improve the abysmal connections with the main line from Barrow? Finally, will my right hon. Friend make some positive assessment of how much greater the problems of Barrow and west Cumbria would be if the Labour party, with its policies of curtailing the overall nuclear programme in relation to nuclear power and the fourth submarine, were ever to come to power? Would not that be totally disastrous for that part of the world?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks. He is absolutely right to focus on the communications issue, which is the key. I shall certainly press his point about the High Newton bypass, which has yet to go through planning procedure. The necessary criteria will have to be met, and it is important that they are met as rapidly as possible. The consultants' report mentions a number of measures relating to communications that are not included in their list for short-term, immediate action. We shall study those measures and consider them for additional action later. I shall take up with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport my right hon. Friend's point about improving the quality and calibre of the service provided to the district by British Rail.

My right hon. Friend mentioned the impact on employment in the district which the Labour party's defence proposals would have on the district were they to be implemented. Those proposals would have absolutely terrifying and disastrous results for the district. A single, nuclear submarine takes 16 million man hours of work to produce at Barrow. The cancellation of the fourth submarine by the Labour party would be a disaster. I do not think that it is honest of the Labour party to ignore that question and fail to say anything. The last Labour party conference passed a resolution which would have the effect of cutting defence spending in this country by about £9 billion. One can be certain that the impact of that on Barrow, and on many other parts of the country, would be devastating.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): While the Secretary of State's announcement is welcome, will he be more specific and tell the House how many of the 11,000 or so lost jobs he expects to be replaced as a result of his proposals? Will he confirm that emphasis and priority will be given to creating jobs in the manufacturing sector, of a kind that people who have worked in the construction and shipbuilding industries will feel that they can fill? Will the Secretary of State say whether Cumbria's former coalfield community is due for any help under the European Community's RECHAR programme? If so, when will the Government stop blocking those funds by refusing to comply with the conditions that the Community lays down?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for welcoming my statement. We cannot estimate how many jobs will be created by such a measure. It is designed to create the conditions that will attract business and create opportunities for local businesses to establish themselves and to expand. The outcome will depend very much on the response of business locally, from the rest of the United Kingdom, and worldwide—because we will be advertising the facilities and the high skills offered by the labour force through the Invest in Britain Bureau to potential inward investors overseas.

The hon. and learned Gentleman asked whether the effort will be primarily or specifically aimed at manufacturing jobs. Yes, it will. The factory building is obviously of that nature, and is geared to take up the slack and to use the skills of the people who live in Barrow and the surrounding constituencies.

As to the RECHAR programme, the hon. and learned Gentleman may know that I had a useful meeting with Commissioner Millan on that subject, and I am pressing him to be more flexible and to remove the objections that he operated until recently.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend accept a small reminder from me that the policy that he announced today is not a precedent or anything new? It is not dissimilar to that which was operated in Corby and Consett after the steel shutdowns. Teesside has seen regeneration as a consequence of Conservative policies under the development corporation, and the work and investment that has been brought to the area are all the result of the Government's specific and directed regional policy. However, I suggest to my right hon. Friend that he pays some attention to the situation in respect of ICI.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend never misses a chance. He is right to remind the House of the successful precedents of Corby and Consett. We have worked on the basis that targeted and focused support is much better than general, across-the-board subsidies that largely go on dead weight cost. Recently, I visited Teeesside and saw some of the fruits and results of the regeneration to which my hon. Friend referred.

As a Government, we can create the infrastructure and framework within which the economy can respond. It is because we have followed overall policies that are

[Mr. Lilley]

attractive to business, and which have, among other things, attracted more inward investment to this country than any other in western Europe, that we have been successful in tackling many of the problems that previous Governments found intractable.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Although such statements are always welcome to the areas concerned, does the Secretary of State have any early plans to treat other regions in a similar way. I refer to the north Yorkshire region and to its mining communities, which have been completely wiped out. My own area has lost 20,000 jobs since 1986 and has not received one penny of Government assistance.

Mr. Lilley: As my statement mentioned, the area in question is unique in two respects—its geographical isolation, and the fact that such a high proportion of its population is dependent on only two employers. For example, 45 per cent. of the population in Barrow are dependent on Vickers.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes); Does my right hon. Friend recall that 12 years ago, when I represented Scunthorpe, I was confronted by a situation very similar to that faced by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks)—a single-industry town that was over-dependent on a particular industry? Does my right hon. Friend recall also that his predecessor took exactly the same decision that he has, particularly with regard to English Industrial Estates? My right hon. Friend is right to emphasise the representations made to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness regarding English Industrial Estates because I predict that in 12 years' time, as a result of my right hon. Friend's statement, my hon. Friend's constituency will find that it has a massively diversified and successful industrial base. A close parallel can be drawn between the situation there and Scunthorpe.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Diversification is the key. The concentration exclusively on nuclear work followed nationalisation of the shipyard by the Labour Government. It is a problem that they created which we are having to solve.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Is the Secretary of State aware that many Opposition Members find it bizarre that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) can talk about good news when 11,000 people are to lose their jobs? Is he further aware that it is now some four months since I and two other officers of the northern group of Labour Members of Parliament met the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, when we drew attention to the fact that the problem was arising and it was many months previous to that that the matter was drawn to his attention by the Northern Development Company? Will he confirm that, despite his announcement today, many thousands of people in the area will lose their jobs and may never work again because of the Government's neglect of the area during the past 12 years?

Mr. Lilley: That is rather a carping response to an effective and generous set of measures. The hon. Gentleman significantly does not mention the Opposition's policies on civil nuclear energy and what effect they would have in aggravating the problems in the areas which he affects to wish to help.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend will be aware that I have in the past had the privilege to represent a constituency in Cumbria and am therefore aware of the difficult industrial structures that pertain to the area. I therefore welcome the sensitive Government package to help deal with the problems, in particular the £15 million to be spent on industrial buildings through English Industrial Estates. However, when English Industrial Estates comes to construct those buildings, I hope that it provides a wide range of building sizes, particularly for small businesses and the smaller units, because in the past the mistake has been made of building far too large units and there has not been the start-up and growth of small businesses in the area available to fill them. That is a valuable point to take on board.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. English Industrial Estates has learnt that there is often demand for small businesses and start-up units, and I hope that it will include them in the range of building programmes up there. I shall take that point up with it and confirm that that is the case.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): But is not the Secretary of State's statement a complete admission of the failure of the Government's policy of relying on market forces without any intervention? Are not the Minister and his two right-wing cronies here today collaborating in a complete U-turn on Government policy? Is he really trying to tell the House that the only way that the Government can keep jobs is to spend massive sums of money on nuclear submarines for nuclear weapons? Does not he know that the Government are, by treaty obligation—the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty—committed to reducing dependence on nuclear weapons? Why did not they look ahead and plan to secure some of the jobs? Lastly, did not the right hon. Gentleman hear the Secretary of State for Transport only last week talk about shifting goods from road to rail? What will he do about that? There is not even a mention of railways in his statement. It is a complete negation of everything that the Secretary of State for Transport said.

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman really thinks that the application of these long-standing measures, in accord with our long-standing philosophy of tailoring, focusing and targeting our aims, represents a change, he is severely mistaken. If he thinks that it is a change to the Labour party's policies, he does not understand his own party's policies. It proposes all sorts of intervention measures which would waste a lot of money and which would not work and I am certainly not going down that route.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I thank my right hon. Friend most warmly for his statement today. It will be very much welcomed in the north-west of England. Is he aware that the cause of the difficulty at the heart of the problem is the 40 per cent. cut in the United Kingdom submarine fleet, a situation which would be made infinitely worse if ever the Labour party were elected, given its commitment to scrap the fourth Trident submarine, its commitment to

large-scale defence cuts and its commitment to destroy jobs in the civil nuclear industry on which the north-west of England is so enormously dependent?

Will my right hon. Friend make absolutely certain that he does everything in his power to ensure that the Labour party never has a chance of gaining control of the levers of power once again? Will he also have a word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and point out to him that if the Ministry of Defence were to place an order for a new category of nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarine, for which there is a requirement, that would also be a great help to the people of Barrow?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in his analysis of the origins of the problem in Barrow and of the consequences that would flow from the cancellation of the fourth Trident submarine. Had the Leader of the Opposition had his way—still a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and elected in 1983 on a programme to get rid of the whole of the Trident fleet—there would not be a single job in Barrow-in-Furness in the shipyards.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not the truth of the matter that, for the past 12 years, the Government have been ripping the guts out of manufacturing and industrial capacity throughout Britain, including Cumbria, and the Secretary for State in particular has been one of those little snobs who has believed that market forces and the philosophy of monetarism can solve everything? Now that the Government's policy is in ruins and the Minister has that pained look on his face as he tries to twist and turn and juggle a £1 million, not new money but of old money. Why does not he do something for the Sunderland shipyards, for every coalfield in Britain and for those areas where the textile and steel industries have been hammered by the Government? If he cannot do any of that, he should get out of the way and let someone else do the job.

Mr. Lilley: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): As someone with long-time family connections with Cumbria, I give more than a grudging welcome to the concentration of measures that my right hon. Friend has announced today. I am sure that they will be welcomed in Cumbria and in west Cumbria in particular. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the retention and recruitment of able people to revive the economy of west Cumbria depends on communications? Will he not forget that the A66 could also do with some improvement if west Cumbria is to be connected to the east coast ports and the EC?

Mr. Lilley: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's points. The consultants reports contains proposals for additional measures beyond those which I mentioned in my statement. We will be looking at them seriously in the light of the consultants' reports and possibly taking matters further in future.

Points of Order

4.47 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to detain you and the House, but this is an important matter.

You will recall that during business questions the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) referred to early-day motion 946, which he has sponsored. You will see that that motion gives the home address of a councillor. I am sure that you can imagine, as I and I am sure other hon. Members can, the obvious and unacceptable repercussions that could occur from the mentioning of a home address in such a motion. It is extremely irresponsible for any hon. Member, particularly an ex-Minister, to cite an individual's home address in a motion. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will deprecate that action and ensure that in future the Table Office does not allow home addresses to be shown in motions.

Mr. Speaker: All hon. Members must take responsibility for motions that they put on the Order Paper and for what they say in this place. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have freedom of speech here. I hope that he gave notice of his point of order to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn).

Mr. Madden: The hon. Gentleman left before I could do so.

Mr. Speaker: It is a convention that we should try to uphold.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the statement, the weather changed from bright sunshine to pouring rain, yet, despite the spaces in the Gallery, people queuing up outside to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry are being denied entry by the security people. In future, can we come to a more sensible arrangement? After all, we are paid for in this place by the public. I do not think, and nor do many of my colleagues, that they should have to stand in the rain when the Chamber is almost empty inside.

Mr. Speaker: We do not recognise the Strangers' Gallery, as the hon. Gentleman knows, but I sense that it is not all that empty. Of course, security has to be taken into consideration these days. I am sure that those people who wish to get in will probably be able to do so later in the debate.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I had hoped that the Leader of the House would have heard me raise this matter, but I am sure that he will read about it.

Mr. Speaker: Come off it; sit down. It must be a point of order to me and not to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Nellist: I still have to refer to him in my point of order to you, Mr. Speaker. You have just told my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) about a convention of the House, which I was trying to obey. I tried to give notice that I wished to raise a point of order when the hon. Member that I wanted to mention

[Mr. Nellist]

was present. You will realise that that was not possible because you are taking points of order some time after the time at which the matter arose.

On 12 occasions today, and on many hundreds of occasions previously, the Leader of the House has, quite rightly, said that he would refer to his right hon. Friends inquiries from hon. Members on both sides of the House about specific subjects. He did so in reply to me a couple of months ago, when I mentioned to him the need for medical help for children in the Ukraine following the Chernobyl accident five years ago. I know that he does so; I have seen the letter.

When an hon. Member asks a question or tables a petition, he receives a reply from the Department concerned. I have just done a straw poll and I have not been able to find an hon. Member who, subsequent to that referral, has had the courtesy of a letter from the Department to which the Leader of the House has referred the matter. Will you consider at your leisure whether it should be a rule of the House that if the Leader of the House gives such a reply hon. Members will receive a letter from the Department concerned saying why a debate cannot take place or a statement be made?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's request will have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench. The contents of an answer are not a matter for me. The object of business questions is to ask about the business for next week. The trouble with business questions these days is that they refer to a wide range of subjects, which by any stretch of the imagination could not possibly all be dealt with next week.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will appreciate that all Back Benchers greatly value business questions and appreciate the fact that in most weeks you allow all hon. Members who are standing to ask questions. Will you examine the record of today's proceedings? If you do, you will see that many hon. Members used business questions to make contrived political jibes that had nothing to do with business? I realise that you do not know in advance what hon. Members are about to ask, but will you ensure in future that those hon. Members who continually abuse the privilege are those who are left with their questions unasked?

Mr. Speaker: That was what I was trying to tell the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) whose question I have just answered. Of course business questions should be directed to business for next week. I said that at the beginning of questions about business today. However, I notice that politics tends to creep into business questions at a time when a general election surely cannot be far off.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Building Societies Act 1986 (Continuance of section 41) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Opposition Day

[13TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Business (Government Policies)

4.53 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move.

That this House condemns Her Majesty's Government for creating and then compounding a recession which has led to large falls in manufacturing output and investment, rapidly rising closures and bankruptcies and the fastest growing unemployment in Western Europe, now hitting all professions, occupations and trades; deplores the problems all businesses, especially small businesses, are facing over high interest rates; regrets, especially in the run-up to 1992, the current contraction of industrial strength in all regions and nations of the country; and calls for an interest rate cut and policies for technology skills and the regions that will build a stronger industrial base throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. In view of the late start to the debate, it will be necessary to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock.

Mr. Brown: This motion draws attention to the urgent need for measures to deal with unemployment, with the crisis in investment, and with the problems of training and skills in our economy.

Today unemployment is nearly 2·25 million men and women, 70,000 higher than last month. That is the biggest May rise since 1945—a higher rise than the previous highest in the United Kingdom, during the last Tory recession in the 1980s. Unemployment is now 600,000 men and women higher than it was at this time last year, having risen relentlessly for 14 months in a row. It is rising faster than in any other country in western Europe; it is rising not merely in the south and the north but in every region of the United Kingdom. It is rising not merely in areas of traditional blue-collar employment but among every profession, trade and occupation, with 80,000 managers now out of work.

Unemployment, the biggest destroyer of opportunity, is now half a million higher than when the current Prime Minister came to power, pledged to a classless society and the hollow promise of opportunity for all. It is half a million higher than when the Prime Minister, when Chief Secretary to the Treasury, told us that families and people in work could plan ahead on the basis of there being an economic miracle.

There has been as fast a rise in the numbers unemployed in a shorter time as under any Prime Minister since the 1930s. The recession is reaching parts of the economy that previous recessions did not reach.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall give way in a minute.

For a year, the Government have boasted that unemployment is below the European average; now, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, unemployment is higher than the European average and is rising faster than anywhere else. By the end of the year, according to the most recent

estimates, unemployment will be higher in Britain than in any other European country with the exceptions of Ireland and Greece. What of the human consequences?

Mr. Michael Brown: It is perfectly legitimate for the hon. Gentleman to mention unemployment in the context of this debate, but I wonder whether he recalls that when challenged by Conservative Members during a previous debate on the Labour party's minimum wage policy, he said that if that policy were implemented unemployment would increase a little additionally. Would he care to say by how much unemployment might rise if his minimum wages policy were introduced?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman should do his research before he comes to the debate. I have never had any statement of the sort attributed to me. It is absolutely clear from looking around Europe, where they all have minimum wages, that that has not affected employment and there is no reason to believe that it would affect it here.

The Secretary of State for Employment has made the issue of the next election very clear. In contrast to Labour's minimum wage proposals, he has said that he wants to abolish wages councils in their entirety. I ask the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and his colleagues to defend the existence of more poverty pay in our economy.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): If the hon. Gentleman is not willing to face head on the reality that statutory minimum wage policies will cause increased unemployment, does he share with Gavin Laird the concern that that policy will erode skill differentials and discourage training?

Mr. Brown: No, I do not and I believe that a minimum wage is not only socially just, but makes for economic efficiency. I quote the words of Sir Winston Churchill, when he introduced the first minimum wage proposals into this House in 1908 and said that he wanted to end a situation where the good employer was undercut by the bad and the bad employer undercut by the worst. That is precisely what our minimum wage proposal will do—*[Interruption.]* That shows that Conservative Members want to return to the position before 1908.

What of the human consequences of unemployment, about which Ministers say so little when talking emptily about opportunity for all? Perhaps the Secretary of State will be more influenced by listening to a manager from a Tory constituency, a Tory voter who was quoted in *The Times* on 4 June as saying of the Tories:

"they have devalued my house. They have lost me my job. They have pushed up inflation. They have made unemployment start rising and they do not seem to be taking any notice. They do not realise the resentment there is pent up. It is not the people who make noises, it is the silent voter who is frustrated by what he sees is happening, the mismanagement of the country".

It is not merely managers; skilled, conscientious and reliable men in their 50s, who have worked every day for nearly 40 years, are now being made redundant, and are gradually beginning to realise that they will never work again. Their suffering is no doubt part of the price that the Chancellor thinks is well worth paying. Widows, the only breadwinners for their families, are condemned to an indefinite future of unrelieved poverty on the basic dole of £40 a week, or just a little more. No doubt the Chancellor regards their unemployment as a price well worth paying.

Young people are denied the opportunity of doing a first-class job. They have never experienced the self-esteem that can follow a good day's work. No doubt that colossal waste of human potential is also part of the price that the Chancellor considers well worth paying. Then there is the family man with a mortgage who goes home to tell his children that, now that he has lost his job, they will shortly have to lose their home. No doubt that family's suffering is all part of the price that the Chancellor considers well worth paying.

The lives of all those people—if I may use the agonised phrase of the former Prime Minister—have been shattered like patterned glass smashed on the ground. No doubt, however, it is all part of the price that the Chancellor thinks well worth paying. The truth is that the only price in unemployment that the country thinks worth paying is the unemployment of the Chancellor himself.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): How does the hon. Gentleman imagine that Labour's policies of giving more power back to the union bosses and increasing taxation levels will contribute to the solving of such problems?

Mr. Brown: It is amazing that, on a day when we have heard that unemployment has risen by 70,000, the hon. Gentleman cannot think about the problems of people in his constituency who are losing their jobs, and that he should suggest that the Government's policies are working. The fact is that they are not.

Today, Ministers should tear down the offensive advertisements, mounted at the taxpayer's expense, which read: "I will work, I must work, I can work." Those advertisements attempt to show that it is not the Government but the unemployed who have failed. The Government should erect, at their own expense, a billboard addressing the truth—that Conservative government is not working. It is the Government who have let down the unemployed.

A memorandum from the Department of Employment itself makes it very clear what is happening, and what will happen in the next few months. According to the document, which was produced on 2 May,

"the forecast for the period October 1990 to October 1991 was for a 50 per cent. rise in the levels of unemployment"—

that is, an increase of 850,000 in the number of unemployed men and women in a year. Since October 1990 half a million have become unemployed, and the Government and the Training Agency predict that 350,000 more will do so in the next few months. The memorandum goes on:

"Any arguments that the Treasury therefore have for a reduction in funding for training are now completely eroded. There is a demonstrable justification for further funds."

Ministers should act today, even if they do so not because they fear the unemployment of others as a result of the recession, but because they fear their own unemployment following a general election. Every day on which they delay the training and employment programmes that we propose for the unemployed represents a further betrayal of those whom they have pushed out of work.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The tenor of the hon. Gentleman's speech makes it plain that he is concerned about the performance of British business. Will he cast his mind back to an era when British Airways was rated below Aeroflot, British Leyland was the butt of international jokes and British Steel was the world's largest loss-maker? A Labour Government were in power

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

then. How can the hon. Gentleman, who has never manufactured anything except dodgy policies, expect to do any better?

Mr. Brown: As the hon. Gentleman delivers his continual lectures from the Back Benches, he should remember that the growth rate under the last Labour Government was higher than it has been under the present Government. Despite what he says, our share of world trade has fallen under this Government, and fallen severely.

The hon. Gentleman should cast his own mind back—to the manifesto that he wrote in 1987. Unemployment in his constituency is now 61 per cent. higher than it was last year. In 1987, he wrote:

"The battle for jobs is finally being won."

It is not only the old, obsolete, traditional companies that are going under; it is also the new, high-technology companies which were told by the Government that they represented the country's future, but which in recent months have needlessly become part of our industrial past. The Government cannot dismiss the 500,000 unemployed, the 40,000 bankruptcies in a year, the 5 per cent. fall in output and the 20 per cent. fall in manufacturing investment as the froth on the economy or a simple loss of fat from industry. They must admit that those losses go far beyond the natural resilience of the economic cycle, and represent not just a tragedy for individuals and families, but the attrition of our industrial base. They have eroded a critical mass of skills and expertise, and a culture of technology that, once lost, cannot easily—if ever—be restored.

Where is the recovery promised by the Chancellor and others? Last November, in the autumn statement, we were told to trust the Government, because the economy was about to turn the corner. A few months later, we were again urged to trust them, because the economy was about to turn the corner. In November 1990, the Prime Minister told us that the recovery would come "early next year", but the unemployed are still waiting. In his Budget speech, the Chancellor told us that the recession was "largely behind us", and that the recovery would begin

"around the middle of this year".—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 165.]

Under pressure, the Chancellor told us a week later that the recovery would begin towards the middle of the year. If recovery were indeed beginning towards the middle of the year, would we not be experiencing it now? The unemployed are still waiting.

In April, in a speech to the Institute of Directors, the Chancellor said:

"we are close to a turning point"—

but the unemployed are still waiting. The right hon. Gentleman continued, in even more fevered language, "victory is in sight." A few days ago, when he realised that developments could not be timed as precisely as he had thought, the Chancellor said: "It's not like arriving at Waterloo station. You cannot tell when it will happen"—a remark which betrays a sad lack of familiarity with the realities of life for London commuters.

The Government told us three years ago that a miracle had happened, when it had not. A year ago, they told us that there was no recession, when there was. Can we now believe anything that they say about a recovery? In his last survey, Mr. Banham, from the CBI, said that things were bad and getting worse. The Engineering Employers Federation's last survey told us that prospects would not improve in the short term. According to the motor manufacturers, the recession would continue until the end of the year. Ian Vallance of British Telecom, one of the Government's supporters, has said:

"there is no sign of an upturn"—

except for him, that is—

"and we do not know when it will come".

Mr. Graham Mackenzie, of United Engineering Steels Ltd., said:

"we were pessimistic six months ago but we never expected anything as bad as this".

On Monday, Goldman Sachs said that it was hard to find any company in any part of the economy that was reporting clear signs of improvement in activity. Kleinwort Benson has referred to

"the almost complete evaporation of confidence over the last few weeks".

What are we to make of all the Government's claims about the promised recovery? All that the Chancellor has been able to say, in an extended interview on these matters, is what he said to David Frost a few days ago—that he could detect "vague stirrings" in the economy.

A transcript has now become available. The Chancellor said:

"There are vague stirrings at the moment, but the signs are there. Business men say 'We cannot see it'"—

but the Government, of course, can see around the corner. David Frost said:

"But the vague stirrings you are saying you have seen—you say you have seen vague stirrings."

The Chancellor replied,

"Faint stirrings, yes."

There are those who claim to see visions; there are those who claim to hear voices; yet others claim to have second sight. Now the Chancellor seeks to persuade us that he can hear, see, feel or otherwise detect "faint stirrings". I am advised by those who know about these matters that, if the symptoms were merely those of seeing things that the rest of us could see and misrepresenting them, the Chancellor would be deemed to be suffering from delusions. Alas, his predicament is more serious: he is seeing things that he knows others cannot see, and living his whole life as if they were there. This is a textbook case of an otherwise sane man hallucinating a whole economic recovery—just as three years ago he hallucinated an economic miracle.

What is to blame for what has gone wrong? Is it consumer spending? Is it the stock exchange crash? Is it inefficient management? Is it the wage rises? Is it the banks? Is it the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), who is often blamed for creating this mess single-handedly? It is interesting that the answer came to us in an interview not in *Vanity Fair* or in "Bark", the Japanese journal which enjoys the confidence of at least one faction of the Conservative party.

In a revealing interview nearer home, hidden away in the privately circulated *House Magazine*, which the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, presumably hoped few would take the trouble to read, the right hon. Gentleman was asked, "Why the recession? Why inflation?" He said:

"It rose because of mistakes which were made during the period I was at the Treasury".

Mistakes at the Treasury—a significant confession. The right hon. Gentleman continued:

"so I can't, and wouldn't wish to, escape my share of the blame."

There it is—a confession, a complete admission of guilt.

The Minister who is to stand before us today has given us a full and frank account of his part in the affair. He has made a clean breast of it and has avoided the necessity of a prolonged cross-examination during his speech. It is a recession which, we now know, cannot be blamed on the Gulf war, America, the EC, the unions or managers but which, by the right hon. Gentleman's admission, is due to mistakes which were made at the Treasury.

Far more significant than the admirable personal confession of guilt by the Secretary of State—in effect, the right hon. Gentleman turning Queen's evidence; I remind the House that he was only a junior Minister during those events, probably keeping bad company at the time—is his statement of the part played by others. As he puts it, the blame attached to those at the Treasury.

Who are these men whose careers have gone unchecked, who have never been forced by *The House Magazine* into a confession of guilt and who have inveigled themselves into more senior positions? I refer, of course, to the former Chief Secretary, now Prime Minister, and to the Financial Secretary, now Chancellor, who were jointly and severally responsible. They were to blame, not the managers of our companies, not trade unions, not businesses and not primarily bankers, either. On the admission of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, mistakes were made by people at the Treasury—the senior ones now at Downing street.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the mistake of cutting interest rates excessively after the crash of October 1987 was endorsed by the shadow Chancellor? Unlike me, the right hon. and learned Gentleman still believes that it would have been right to have interest rates even lower then, while I have recognised that that was not right and that we erred in the direction of resisting a slump. The consequence was greater inflation.

Mr. Brown: That was an interesting statement. The right hon. Gentleman now seeks to tell us that it was a "mistake" and not "mistakes" that were made during the period he was at the Treasury. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Of course we supported the reduction in interest rates—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] We did not make a mistake. Of course we supported the reduction in interest rates. We did not support the £6 billion in tax cuts, mainly to the very rich, which was the primary reason why things moved ahead after March and caused the problems.

Mr. Lilley: In other words, the hon. Gentleman is saying that I was not mistaken.

Mr. Brown: The right hon. Gentleman was certainly mistaken. Talking about mistakes, the biggest mistake made in that three months was the 1988 Budget, which caused many of the problems with which we must now deal. I asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the time how he could defend that Budget, on the grounds not only of social justice but of economic efficiency, when the Government pumped £6 billion into the economy and then cut interest rates again. That is why we have all the problems now, and everyone knows it. They are the men who are guilty of creating the recession they once claimed never existed, guilty of compounding it by further actions and, even now, guilty of failing to correct the recession without rapidly rising unemployment and cutting at the heart of our industrial capacity.

What does the Prime Minister now say after all that? The classless society now looks like a hollow promise; opportunities for all look, with rising unemployment, like a sick joke; a nation "at ease with itself"—the comment he took from President Bush and said was applicable to Britain—now looks like a contradiction in terms. What are we now told? At the start of the week, we were told that we would have a keynote speech defining Majorism. The Prime Minister appears to have changed his mind—that in itself is a definition of Majorism. We have had Thatcherism, but of course we never had Churchillism, Macmillanism or Gladstoneism. Apparently, after six months of these achievements, and after all that new thinking, we are to have Majorism. I believe that the nation would excuse the lack of Majorism as a philosophy if we at least had policies to deal with one problem—rising unemployment.

Ten years ago, we were told that the Prime Minister was not for turning but that the economy would turn. Now it seems that things have changed. We have a Prime Minister who does nothing but turn and an economy that will not. What is to happen in this recovery which we were promised? The Government's case is that, after this unfortunate recession, will come sustainable recovery and all our worries will cease—exactly what they told us after the first Tory recession. It is even less credible when we have entered a second Tory recession with unemployment higher than it was in 1979 and industrial capacity smaller.

The real question is, what kind of recovery can we expect? Will it be investment-led growth? Will it be industry-led? Will it be likely to ensure sustainable growth? The Chancellor has already begun to answer the question. When pressed by David Frost, the only stirrings the right hon. Gentleman could detect were not stirrings in industry or manufacturing, not even signs of new investment in industry as a whole, but stirrings in the property or the housing market. Those are precisely the sectors whose expansion without investment-led growth led to the recession in the first place. Indeed, the very sectors in manufacturing industry upon which the country's future most depend for sustainable growth will, by the Chancellor's own admission, be the last to recover.

Is it not the case that the Government recognise that fact and will not tell the nation the full truth? Despite all pleas to the contrary, Britain will do badly in 1991; it will also do badly in 1992, according to the Government's own figures. As we leave the recession, if interest rates and inflation fall, the real questions will be: how much capacity will have been lost? How much unemployment will there be? How much investment will there be? The question that dominates our future as well as our present deliberations is: how can we have steady, sustainable, long-term growth for Britain without the capacity, particularly the skills, and the strength to sustain it?

Anyone looking at the forecasts that are made in Europe, with the Government's help, will know that investment prospects in Britain are believed to be about the lowest in Europe, not just in 1991 but in 1992. Investment is expected to rise by 4 per cent. in Germany, 6 per cent. in Spain and 4 per cent. in Italy but only just over 2 per cent. in Britain. Having had a worse record for output this year than any other country except Greece, next year Britain will fall to the bottom of the European

[Mr. Brown]

investment league as well. According to the forecasts, employment is expected to fall in 1991 and 1992. Not only will Britain's export performance be the worst of any EC country this year but, according to the EC's forecasts, the same will happen next year as well.

What will happen to our balance of payments next year? We will have all the elements in 1992 or 1993 of the problems that caused the present recession, including the pressures from imports and the balance of payments which brought rising interest rates and rising inflation. The answer is to be found in the Government's own publication, the Red Book of the Budget. According to the Government's figures, next year imports will rise by 4·5 per cent. The balance of payments, which is in a parlous state this year during a recession, will worsen yet again by £2 billion, according to the Government's estimates, and will have to be financed from abroad through higher interest rates.

Built into the Government's forecasts and into what they are saying in their official publications and buried away in the Red Book are all the elements of future grief in rising imports and a worsening balance of payments deficit. Let us be absolutely clear: there is no long-term strategy from the Government to bring Britain sustainable growth—only a short-term tactic to get them through an election. Even the Government, with their own figures, cannot claim to offer sustainable recovery.

If they do not believe me, will they listen to what industry is saying? The president of the Engineering Employers Federation said:

"My contention is that the United Kingdom manufacturing sector will simply not be big enough to support the kind of expanding economy that we need in the 1990s"

Martin Jacomb of Barclays de Zoete Wedd said:

"It is amazing how long it has taken people to realise the competitive weakness of our economic performance. Even today, our political leaders do not acknowledge it. You still hear them talking as if we were economically successful."

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way. I have already done so many times.

If anyone is in any doubt about the gap that must be bridged in the run-up to 1992 and beyond, let him consider the problems that we face not only in training, technology, output and investment as a whole, but in manufacturing investment for the future.

A survey that the Confederation of British Industry gave its members only a few days ago said that manufacturing investment per worker in the United Kingdom is only £2,800; in Germany, it is £4,000; in France, £4,300—60 per cent. higher; in Japan it is more than twice as much—£6,000. Those are the 1989 figures. Investment in other countries has risen and is still rising in most cases, but in Britain it is down to what we estimate to be £2,400 per manufacturing worker. It is falling this year and slipping behind all our competitors as we move forward.

The tragedy is that the loss of investment power for manufacturing workers is not a one-off occurrence that can be dismissed as a freak or a blip—it is a recurring and lasting feature of the past 12 years. Over the past 12 years, the British worker has had only £18,000 invested in him in real terms. The figure for the German worker was nearly 30 per cent. higher, for the French it was 60 per cent. higher and even for the Irish worker it was 50 per cent. higher. In the Netherlands, the figure was 250 per cent. more, and in Canada and America it was 100 per cent. more. No other country invested less in manufacturing per worker except Greece. If the Government will not listen to us, will they listen to the voices from industry?

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No.

Under this Government, the whole country now sees 1992 not as the opportunity that it should have been, but as the threat that it has now become.

What of the role of the Department of Trade and Industry? For 12 years, the DTI has done next to nothing. Only a few weeks ago—this is important, because the Secretary of State thought it so in the speeches that he made—after 12 years of doing nothing, the Secretary of State acted and made a few speeches on DTI policy. What was the purpose of those speeches? It was to explain the philosophy behind doing absolutely nothing. I suppose that, having acted and made so many mistakes at the Treasury, by his own acknowledgment, he is playing safe by doing nothing at the DTI.

Under the new Prime Minister, the Department of the Environment is at least getting rid of the poll tax, if not until 1993 or 1994. At least the Department of Health is setting itself new targets even if, it says, they will not make any difference until 1995 or beyond. At least the Department of Transport is talking about investing to get trains to run on time at some as yet unspecified time in the future.

What has happened at the DTI? What does it do when its sphere of responsibility includes dealing with the rundown of research, the failure of investment, the weakening of many of our exports and needs for innovation and the problems of the regions? What is the most important and interesting single initiative of the DTI over the past few weeks? It is not a new policy initiative or programme, but a video. *The Sunday Times* states:

"Plummeting morale at the DTI has persuaded the bosses to commission a video to remind staff how vital their work is. The low-key image of Peter Lilley has led some officials to look back with rose tinted spectacles on the reign of Lord Young whose campaigns made DTI staff feel important. The grumblers doubt that the new video will make much difference. Mr. Lilley will star in it himself."

Presumably the video will begin, "You may not of heard of me, but I am in charge here."

When industry needs research and development support; when it needs a Department to speak up for them in government and imaginative thinking of public and private partnership to develop the infrastructure; at a time when we need to modernise—as the Labour party proposes—rather than abolish regional policy if we are not to slip back in the run-up to 1992, the best that we have is a video featuring the Secretary of State. The problems of this country are too important to be left to a Government who have failed.

When the House of Lords recommended improved capital allowances to boost investment in manufacturing —as the Labour party has also recommended—and when it recommended in its report tax credits for additional research and development such as those in America—a similar proposal to that advanced by the Labour party —the Government chose to do absolutely nothing. The

House of Lords proposed regional development agencies, but we see absolutely no action except cuts in regional incentives, cuts in regional innovation and cuts in the regional technology transfer budget.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell the House what the commitments to tax-free credits for research and development amount to in total. The House would like to know precisely what figures the Labour party has in mind to bolster industry. While he is at it, will he kindly explain why Japanese and American companies prefer to invest more in this country than in the whole of the European Community?

Mr. Brown: That investment will not continue unless we have a decent research and development policy and a decent regional policy. The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) is a well-known attender of Budget debates. He knows that we set out our proposals clearly during the previous Budget debate. They were set out in the document "Modern Manufacturing Strength" and during every debate that we have had since.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I could take one, two, three or four people, but I do not know which faction of the Conservative party to favour.

When the House of Lords proposed regional development agencies, no action was taken by the do-nothing Department other than to cut regional grants. It is also important that when the Government holds guarantees over British Steel and a golden share, and even after one of the most critical reports by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, the DTI's response is again to do absolutely nothing. It even refused to debate the issue or to meet me and the shadow Scottish Secretary to discuss it. When the Department was criticised over Rover and British Aerospace and misleading the House and the country by a Select Committee with a Conservative majority, the response was wholly complacent and did not even begin to answer the central charge of deception. Once again, there was nothing from the DTI.

When criticised over secret deals on shipbuilding which prevented investment in profitable capacity in the north-east, the DTI said nothing and refused even to answer the charge. The House of Lords argued that the high incidence of takeovers is damaging to manufacturing industry—as Labour has argued in its policy for stricter takeover laws—but Government policy has been merely to enunciate what is called the Lilley doctrine to prevent state takeovers from abroad and then to water it down almost out of existence in a speech that he made yesterday.

When the most serious takeover threat to British manufacturing in modern history is deemed to be possible, the Government do absolutely nothing and refuse to make clear their views. Would the Government of any other country in western Europe do nothing, if its largest manufacturer and its second largest exporter were at risk? Would it ever come to that in another country, if such a takeover were even contemplated? Why will the Conservative party not make clear its views about the importance of ICI to research and development and to the regions of this country?

If the Government were serious about the needs of industry, about competition policy or about the regions, they would tell us now that they will introduce legislation in the next Session of Parliament—if they go beyond October—to deal with cartels, to set up the regional development agencies that the country needs and that, instead of the privatisation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department and the British Technology Group, we shall have policies for training, technology and innovation.

What about small businesses? Is the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry aware that business debts, small and large, ran at £30 billion last year and that interest repayments were four times higher than in 1979? Is he also aware that £30 billion went in interest payments because of high interest rates, but that only £14 billion was spent on manufacturing investment? Is he aware that interest payments are now a far greater share of companies' outlay than their total investment? Is he aware that because of that and because of the margins charged by the banks, there were 10,000 small business failures in 1980, which was bad enough, but that there were 25,000 last year—500 a week. In 1991, they are now estimated to be anything between 40,000 and 50,000, yet on this, as on every other issue, the Secretary of State does absolutely nothing.

The Government cannot act on Europe because they are divided. They cannot act on training, unemployment, the public services or industry because they are caught between the Thatcherite ideology that they all support and the reality that the public will not go along with it. They are frozen into inaction and scared of further divisions within the party.

The result is that, while the French Prime Minister, who took office only a few days ago, could say that, starting on her first day in office, her biggest priority was to build and to prepare French industry properly for 1992, when our Prime Minister took office on the steps of Downing street in November, he did not say that his aim was to rebuild British industry or the British economy, but merely to reunite a divided Conservative party.

There is urgency in the measures that we are proposing today for investment, training and employment because the summer and autumn will be make or break months for decisions which, if avoided or badly made, will blight our economy for a decade. Having dithered over our preparations for 1992; having drifted into recession and failed to prevent the calamitous collapse of industrial investment; having failed to act decisively over the skills programme, over training for the unemployed, over the industrial investment incentive and over the technology trusts, all of which we have proposed; having failed to act decisively over the regional development agencies that we believe are necessary, not just in the regional interest but in the national interest; and having been caught unawares as our industrial capacity has shrunk, while our competitors have moved ahead, there is little time left for Britain in the run-up to 1992.

Faced with the deadline of 1992, any other Government——

Mr. Lilley: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that, whatever the impression he is trying to give, he cannot offer or commit himself to a single extra penny of expenditure because industry does not feature as one of the Labour party's two top priorities, and that any extra expenditure, at which he might be hinting in the remarks that he has finally got round to making, can therefore be made only when growth provides the money?

Mr. Brown: I know that the right hon. Gentleman has to intervene on this point, but he should have listened to the Budget debates and to the Labour party's own debate during Budget week, when I set out the Labour party's proposals on training, investment, skills and action on unemployment. We made our spending commitments absolutely clear in that Budget statement, just as we made them clear with the publication of "Modern Manufacturing Strength".

Any other Government, faced with the deadline of 1992 and pressed for decisions, would do more than adopt the "nothing" approach of the Department of Trade and Industry. Having created a recession, compounded it by further mistakes and having failed to correct it without a cut in industrial capacity, Ministers have failed, failed and failed again. They have nothing to offer the country except their resignations.

5.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its determination to defeat inflation and on the increasing success of that policy; recognises that industry's first priority is the defeat of inflation so that growth can be resumed; welcomes the transformation of the British economy over the last 12 years; rejects the pro-inflationary policies of the Opposition who would increase public spending and borrowing, provoke a pay explosion and take risks with the exchange rate; and condemns their anti-industry policies of nationalisation, intervention and punitive taxation which would threaten the Government's remarkable achievement.'.

Listening to that customary gloom-laden speech from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), I could not help recalling that splendid old radio programme "Take It From Here", which featured a family called "The Glums". If the BBC ever revive that programme—I hope that it will—the hon. Gentleman is a shoe-in for the part of Ron Glum. He is not merely glum; he is mired in gloom; he positively radiates gloom. He can brighten a room just by leaving it. His speech was long on gloom, but short on policies. He spoke for 30 minutes before even mentioning any Labour party policies. There is a simple reason for that—it is because the Labour party has no strategy on inflation, no strategy for the recession and no strategy on unemployment.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: The Labour party keeps its policies out of sight because it is ashamed of them and because it knows that those policies would make every one of those problems worse.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: Labour's policies would raise inflation, deepen recession, and increase unemployment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will be able to intervene in a moment. he spoke for 35 minutes without telling us about any of his policies.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for finally giving way.

Is not the right hon. Gentleman gloomy about unemployment at the moment? Can he tell us whether his Government now irrevocably rule out Labour's proposed training and employment programme that is designed to reduce unemployment? If he is doing that, he is abandoning and betraying the unemployed.

Mr. Lilley: What a pathetic intervention. The hon. Gentleman knows that that point, which he did not raise in his speech, was dealt with adequately last night by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Gordon Brown: The House deserves a direct answer to a question which, incidentally, I asked in my speech, although the right hon. Gentleman did not seem to hear it. Are the Government now ruling out a training and employment programme to reduce the rate of unemployment? Are they ruling out an emergency programme, which we believe to be in the national interest and an essential matter of policy?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman knows that that point was dealt with perfectly well last night by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The hon. Gentleman wants to conceal the fact that, as I have said, the Labour party does not have any policies on the recession, inflation or unemployment.

The Labour party does not have a strategy for inflation, because it does not recognise its importance; it does not have the faintest understanding of its cause and does not have a clue about how to cure it. Conservative Members know that success in dealing with inflation is a precondition for everything else. That is why getting inflation down is our top priority. Even businesses that are experiencing the pain of recession agree with us about that. The good news is that inflation is coming down—we are winning that battle. Inflation is already down 4·5 per cent. from its peak and is below the lowest level that was ever achieved by the last Labour Government. Inflation is on track for 4 per cent. by the end of the year, which is half the lowest level that was ever achieved by the Labour Government.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): What about the underlying rate?

Mr. Lilley: The underlying rate of inflation, about which the hon. Lady is asking, is also heading downwards, as yesterday's producer prices index of 6 per cent. confirms. What is more, both the Confederation of British Industry and the journal of the Bank of England think that that index is too pessimistic about our success in reducing the underlying rate of inflation, because many firms seem to report their list prices—*[Interruption.]*—without taking into full account the discounts that they are giving, as they are requested to do. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I apologise for interrupting the Secretary of State, but our debate is not helped by excessive sedentary shouting from both sides of the House. I hope that we can have some self-restraint.

Mr. Lilley: Conservative Members understand that Labour Members do not want to hear their lack of policies being exposed.

As well as believing that the rate of underlying inflation is declining more rapidly than the official index suggests, the CBI also states that 19 per cent. of the firms in its survey have reduced their net prices over the past four months. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dunfermline,

East would prefer those figures to be more pessimistic but, alas for him, there is more good news. Pay costs are also slowing down. That process is best encouraged where top management sets an example. Throughout industry as a whole, pay settlements are 2·25 percentage points below their peak. The CBI's figures show that one in five companies is deferring any pay increase for the time being. If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East could pay some attention to the debate, perhaps he will tell the House whether he is prepared to welcome that moderation in pay settlements—I shall give way to him if he wishes me to do so—or is he so afraid of his trade union masters that he will not welcome pay moderation?

The fact is that the Labour party does not have any policies to bring inflation down, but it has plenty that would put it up. A Labour Government would increase public borrowing, as they always do, which would raise inflation——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby) *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

A Labour Government would increase public spending, as they always do, which would raise inflation. They would spark off a public-sector pay explosion, as they always do, which would increase inflation. They would push up wages everywhere through their statutory minimum wage. That would certainly increase inflation. They would cut interest rates prematurely. That would increase inflation. Let us face it, they would devalue the pound. All Labour Governments have devalued the pound. The Labour party is the party of devaluation, and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) advocates that course.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The Secretary of State is telling us all about inflation. Any fool can bring down inflation and this Government almost certainly will, because it is always slow in graveyards. However, when the Government have brought inflation down to the lowest possible figure and they have a graveyard, where will the locomotive for growth come from? What will produce the return to growth?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman simply does not realise that bringing inflation down is the precondition for a return to growth. As we bring inflation down and interest rates fall, lower inflation itself gives a stimulus to the economy and both together cause a resumption of growth.

One City firm recently said that because everyone recognises that the Labour party is prone to devalue, a Labour Government would have to keep interest rates at anything up to 30 per cent. to hold the pound within its exchange rate mechanism limits. All these Labour policies would take us back to the funny money of the 1970s in fairly short order.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): The point that my right hon. Friend has omitted so far and of which all the country is aware is that a Labour Government would increase taxation. Will my right hon. Friend speculate? The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has said that one in 20 people would pay more in tax. The Leader of the Opposition has said that one in 18 people would pay more in tax. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has said that one in eight people would pay more in tax. Which one does my right hon. Friend think is telling the truth? Or are they incapable of doing so?

Mr. Lilley: Frankly, I do not believe any of them. If one looks at their voting record, one finds that those hon. Members voted against every cut in the basic rate of taxation which brought the rate down from 33p to 25p in the pound. I judge them by their voting record, not by their attempts to excuse and argue their way out of the consequences of their high-spending policies.

It is extraordinary that, having chosen to debate the recession, the hon. Member for Dumfermline, East has as yet offered us no insight into how the Labour party would deal with it. He described it, revelled in it and gloated over it, yet we heard not one whit about what he would do about it. It is his politics of gloom once again, without a single ray of policy to illuminate us.

The hon. Gentleman's calls for further interest rate cuts, when he makes them, are totally discredited by the admission of his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, that, throughout his entire time as Shadow Chancellor, he has advocated a 1 per cent. cut in interest rates. He maintained that call even when interest rates were at their lowest point in 1988. As the hon. Member for Dumfermline, East pointed out, I and the Government as a whole have acknowledged, with the benefit of hindsight, that it was not necessary to cut interest rates following the October 1987 crash. But the shadow Chancellor still says that we cut them too little. He demonstrates his unworthiness to be Shadow Chancellor because he does not understand the connection between interest rates and the economy. If we had followed his advice, then or ever since, inflation would have gone higher and the recession would have been more severe.

There is no doubt on the Government side of the House that Labour's policies would aggravate even further the problems that we face. A recent range of stockbrokers' analyses of the likely impact of Labour's policies agreed that a Labour Government would mean a loss of confidence, higher interest rates, more inflation and an increase in the cost of equity capital for investment.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman thinks that the best way out of the recession is by way of expanding the property market, as the Chancellor seems to suggest.

Mr. Lilley: That is a facile and silly point. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said no such thing. The economy will resume growth in the second half of this year as a result of our success in getting inflation down.

Labour's whole growth strategy—if the phrase is not a self-contradiction—has a fatal flaw right at its heart. All its policies to boost growth require a great deal of extra public spending. They require more spending on training, more on science, more on innovation and more on the regions. But their own rule—Beckett's law—tells us that, apart from pensions and child benefits, everything must wait "until resources allow". Note the logic—the Labour party will boost growth by spending more, but the spending must wait until growth has been boosted. The argument deserves to be more famous than it is, but in a sense it is pretty famous already. In every textbook of logic, it is called circulus in probando.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my right hon. Friend not forget to make the point that, if the Labour party was allowed to spend the £30 billion of additional money that it wants to spend, there would be an increase in income tax of 15p in the pound?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. That is why the Labour party tries desperately to cover over the consequences of its spending plans for its tax obligations and why Labour Members gave the confused, misleading and self-contradictory answers to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) referred.

Perhaps I have been a little harsh on the Labour party so far. I believe half of its argument. I believe the part about spending. I believe that it would spend more on the multitude of priorities which its Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury denies. I believe that it would spend more even on industry because it would spend more on subsidies. It would spend more on quangos. None of that is hard to believe, because it has done it all before. The part that I do not believe about the Labour party's strategy is the growth.

Far from generating growth, the Labour party's spending would cripple the economy. That spending could come only from higher taxation, to which it is already committed, and higher borrowing, at which it hints. In both cases the increase to which it admits is but a fraction, a small fraction, of what its announced promises add up to.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby wrote in April's *New Statesman and Society*—it does not have a large Tory readership:

"To fulfil Labour's proposals we would now need substantially higher borrowing and bigger tax increases."

Absolutely right. In the "On the Record" programme last month, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said:

"In an ideal world we would like to say, yes . . . we'd increase taxation."

When interpreted that means, "We know that tax increases are unpopular, so we will not admit to them until after the election".

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): As the Secretary of State is in the process of quoting lots of radio programmes, would he like to confirm his complete agreement with the Leader of the House who, in a recent radio programme, pointed out that taxation had clearly risen for the average family under this Government?

Mr. Lilley: It is strange then, that the hon. Gentleman voted against every reduction in tax rates that we made.

The part of Labour's policies in which I believe is that there would be some sort of growth as a result of its policies. It would be a growth in taxes and in borrowing. That would consume the resources that industry needs in order to expand and prosper. One thing that I would have thought that the Labour party might have learnt from the 1980s is that, when income and corporation tax rates are reduced, one is more likely to see growth than when they are increased.

We reduced tax rates in the 1980s and saw growth in Britain, for the first peacetime decade this century, exceed that in Germany or France. That was the same decade which saw not only lower tax rates but privatisation, huge reductions in subsidies, less intervention and a pruning of quangos. My colleagues will understand my lack of optimism about Labour's formula: higher taxes, nationalism, increases in subsidies, more intervention and a record number of quangos.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East asked me again today to comment upon the Hanson-ICI issue, but he should know better than that. There has been no bid and no Secretary of State could conceivably comment on a hypothetical merger. If I did, and a bid subsequently emerged that called for action by the United Kingdom authorities, the courts might rule that I had "fettered my discretion". In any case, like it or not, any bid where the combined turnover exceeds 5 billion ecu is outside British jurisdiction. It would fall to be considered by the European Commission.

It is hypocritical of a party that is now committed to giving away our power to govern ourselves in monetary, economic and social matters to get hot under the collar about our loss of sovereignty on merger policy. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has made a lot of noise recently about the threatened possible takeover of ICI, but he has said nothing about the biggest takeover threat facing British industry—the takeover threatened by Labour's renationalisation plans.

Nationalisation is the N-word which the Labour party dare not mention. It is the policy that dare not speak its name. If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and his colleagues are reluctant to speak about it, I shall speak about it for them. The hon. Gentleman's specific documented pledges would involve the Labour party taking over companies worth three times as much as ICI, which invest four times as much a year and which employ five times as many people. Now that is some takeover threat.

Today the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East sneered at our policy of referring to the Mergers and Monopolies Commission where foreign state companies try to take over British firms. It seems that the Labour party is still so obsessed by nationalisation that it would prefer British companies to be owned by foreign Governments than to be owned by British private enterprise.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On foreign state companies, would the right hon. Gentleman care to comment on the arrangement between ICI and Kemira, a state-owned Finnish company? That arrangement would not only have transferred ownership of the fertiliser section of ICI to Kemira, but would have preserved many hundreds of jobs in my constituency and those of Cleveland, Bristol and Edinburgh, Leith. The preoccupation with nationalisation and national ownership is an obsession in the mind of the Secretary of State rather than in that of anyone else. Was not that the reason for blocking that arrangement which had already been agreed upon?

Mr. Lilley: The MMC recommended that the deal be forbidden and I accepted its advice as has been the practice of every Secretary of State since time immemorial. No guarantee was given that jobs would be preserved had the MMC recommendation not been accepted.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will be aware of my concern that Britain's only potash mine has been put at risk as a consequence of his decision on the Kemira deal with ICI. At some stage or other, Ministers should stop hiding behind the fact that civil servants, quangos or anyone else make the recommendation. They are in the job to make such a decision, and there

are occasions—even if it means that foreign firms have an interest in a British Company—when British national interest should be uppermost in the Secretary of State's mind.

Mr. Lilley: All those points were taken into consideration by the MMC report that I considered. I accepted its judgment that the arrangement was against overall British national interest. Such acceptance has been the practice of Secretaries of State for at least a decade.

From time to time, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East criticises the Government for what he calls their "hands-off" attitude to industry. By contrast, he would operate a hands-on policy, but so did the Boston strangler—by and large Labour Government policies have had rather similar effects, as they have throttled industry. That desire to intervene is not just a passion of the hon. Gentleman as the shadow Chancellor—normally a hands-offish type—recently declared his belief that

"Intervention by Government can make a significant contribution to improved efficiency and productivity"

Yet look at the shadow team who want to get their hands on British industry. They are not all here today, but there are seven of them to match four of us—quantity against quality. Not one of them has ever sullied his hands with a day's work in British industry during their adult lives. If I am wrong, I shall happily give way to any of the Opposition Front-Bench team who want to tell the House of their experience, which will enable them to improve, as the shadow Chancellor said, the efficiency and productivity of industry through intervention. Can any of them tell us what experience they have gained in industry which will enable them to do that? [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] Normally the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is jumping up and down like a jack-in-the-box. Normally he is hyperactive. There must be some truth in what a journalist told me—he works only when he is plugged into a fax machine.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I have had some experience in industry. Is the Secretary of State aware that the machine tool industry is the barometer of the manufacturing industry, if not the economy? A few hours ago, a number of my hon. Friends and I met senior directors of the Machine Tool Industry Association. They are extremely concerned about the present recession and the state of the manufacturing industry. They say that, if present policies continue—we must assume that they would if the country were unfortunate enough to be inflicted once again with a Conservative Government—the deficit in manufacturing investment would be £15 billion a year by the year 2000. They believe that, if the current recession continued for more than six months we should have no machine tool industry in the country.

Mr. Lilley: I understand the concerns that the hon. Gentleman articulates. His experience gives him much more right to be on the Opposition Front Bench than that of its present incumbents. It is not just I who think that, because, last week, *The Sunday Times* hit the nail on the head in its leader:

"If Mr. Brown was at the industry department we would be back to the days when politicians thought they knew more about the running of business than managers or shareholders, even though most politicians have never run anything (in Mr. Brown's case the most he seems to have run is Edinburgh students' council)."

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen's ignorance of business means that they just do not understand what makes industry tick. If they had any understanding of business they certainly would not be proposing to create a multitude of new quangos and regulations. The one lesson they have learnt is not to talk too often in public about their policies. If they will not, I will.

Just from reading "Modern Manufacturing Strength", Labour's latest policy document on industry, I have found seven new varieties of quango. We have the national investment bank—in other words, a state-run bank—regional development agencies in England, British Technology Enterprise, a defence diversification agency, a new national training agency, technology trusts and, the final irony,

"a new network of small business advice services"

to help firms with the

"bewildering multiplicity of overlapping openings"

The majority of those quangos will have to borrow on the credit of the British Government and spend what is, in effect, our money.

Quangos are not the only extra burdens that the Labour party is planning to impose on business which were not mentioned by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. It will introduce a new jobs tax of 0·5 per cent. on the payroll of companies whose training effort does not meet the Labour party's approval. That will kill off another 50,000 jobs. The Labour party plans to implement in its entirety the European Commission's social action programme, which has been condemned by every major employers organisation in Britain. That would add £3·5 billion to industry's costs and destroy another 100,000 jobs. In addition, there will be thousands, more forms for businesses to fill in because Labour is proposing "social audits" for firms to ensure that

"social as well as economic costs of decisions . . . are properly identified".

The Labour party also intends to introduce a new sex equality Act that will require businesses to produce an annual company equalities report. New obligations will be put on companies to make them give employees time off to engage in trade union activity. As well as that, the Labour party will introduce a new entitlement to 10 days paternity leave. One thing is certain. Under Labour, hundreds of thousands more people will be taking time off, and permanently. The truth is that Labour's industrial policies are a job destruction programme on a mammoth scale.

The hon. Gentleman wept salt tears over today's unemployment figures, but he gave no policies for reducing unemployment, and small wonder. His party's main policy plank—the statutory minimum wage—is about the most effective way imaginable to destroy jobs. That is not just my view. The only evidence that the hon. Gentleman could find in its favour came from 1908, from a person who was not even an economist, distinguished though he was as a Liberal of those days. Not only is it not just my view: it was the view of the last but one Labour Government, who published a report entitled "A National Minimum Wage," which concluded:

"the greater the cost of the national minimum, the greater the consequent adjustment in the level of employment is likely to be."

If the House wants something more up to date—though still from the same party—the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said:

"The employment consequences of a minimum wage would be little short of disastrous."

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The right hon. Gentleman is indulging in the most abominable kind of nit-picking, at a time when unemployment has risen by 3,200 people per working day since the present Prime Minister took office. We are losing 4,000 jobs a week in manufacturing industry and it is forecast that 40,000 firms will go bust this year, yet all the Minister can do is nitpick. When do the Government intend to bring unemployment down?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about unemployment, why does he give his allegiance to a policy which, in the view of even his hon. Friends, will increase unemployment by hundreds of thousands? For example, the Fabian Society, part of his party, recently provided the helpful estimate that up to 880,000 jobs could be destroyed by Labour's minimum wage plan.

Even the National Institute of Economic and Social Research—not normally well disposed to the present Government—estimated recently that a statutory minimum wage could raise the price level by 3·5 per cent. at the end of three years, while reducing the level of GDP by 0·5 per cent., with all the employment consequences that would follow.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in addition to a minimum wage causing such additional unemployment, it would hit hardest those with most difficulty in the job market, namely, the disabled, ethnic minorities and women?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It would, at the same time, destroy the incentives of people to improve their skills. Opposition Members seem to be getting rattled by criticism coming from within their own ranks on this subject. Recently, the Leader of the Opposition attempted to refute them by claiming that the OECD had concluded that the effect of the minimum wage in France had been

"in plain language, no job losses."

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) wrote to the *Financial Times* yesterday in similar vein, claiming:

"The most recent study by the OECD into France found no unemployment impact through introducing a minimum wage."

The OECD actually said:

"indications are that the increase in the relative value of the SMIC"—

the French minimum wage—

"in the 1980s is likely to have reduced employment levels, especially for youths and the unskilled."

The language of the Leader of the Opposition may be plain, but in this case he is plain wrong.

This week, the Leader of the Opposition, who has been very active, relaunched Labour's science and innovation policy for the umpteenth time. It appeared in a document entitled "Pushing Back the Frontiers"—an apt title. It pushes them all the way back to Harold Wilson and the white heat of technology.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Does my right hon. Friend recall that Harold Wilson promised the nation the white heat of technology and we ended up with the selective employment tax, which put thousands out of work?

Mr. Lilley: Absolutely. He applied all the policies to which the Labour party is now reverting, although the document that Labour published this week is almost devoid of concrete policies. Instead, Labour sets a target, and the document says:

"Labour believes a reasonable target is to increase civil research and development from the present 1·8 per cent. of GDP to 2·5 per cent."

Table 2 of the document says that that would involve increasing spending on research and development by £5·8 billion. That is some target. As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said recently, unhelpfully from Labour's point of view:

"Anyone can invent targets, but targets won't hit themselves. The challenge is what action the Government will take to meet those targets."

Unfortunately, the document does not spell out what action a Labour Government would take to meet the target. If Labour proposes to do so by increased Government spending on research and development, that will represent a massive breach of Beckett's law. If not, it must be relying entirely on the only specific proposal in the document, and that is Labour's discredited idea of tax credits for incremental research and development.

I am amazed that Labour Members are still plugging that idea. All the international studies of such tax incentives show how ineffective and wasteful they are. An Inland Revenue study carried out with the help of the OECD reached three conclusions. The first was that countries which operated the biggest tax incentives for research and development had the lowest level of industry-financed research and development. The second was:

"the best evidence available suggests that special fiscal incentives only increase industrial research and development by an amount that is roughly half of the revenue forgone by the government: the remainder goes to swell companies' cashflow and post-tax profits."

The third was that much of the consequence of such incentives was simply to enable accountants to reclassify expenditure that was going on anyway as research and development. The study concluded:

"in some instances, evidence of abuse (amounting to criminal fraud) has led to the discontinuation . . . of fiscal incentive measures."

So if Labour is relying on tax credits to reach its extra £5·8 billion target, it must be willing to forgo, say, double that in tax revenues, while giving accountants and fraudsters a field day.

Of course, what really makes companies invest in research and development is the spur of competition and the lure of profit. In the last six years, when profits increased substantially, industry raised its spending on research and development by about 50 per cent. in real terms.

On Monday of this week we published—or *The Independent* newspaper published on our behalf—a research and development scoreboard. That was widely welcomed, and I hope that it will give industry more of a stimulus and the financial world more of an understanding of the importance of research and development.

I have today drawn up another scoreboard. This one compares the performance of the Conservatives with that of the Socialists over our entire periods in office. We are proud of our record, even if Labour Members are ashamed of theirs, and if they insist on going back to the policies that they practised during the last Labour Government, it is legitimate for us to compare the performance of that Labour Government with our performance.

I concede that Labour wins in some categories. I start with inflation, and I must admit that on that one they are high scorers. Prices rose more than twice as fast under Labour as they have risen under Conservative rule. Labour also comes out top in days lost through strikes. They averaged 14·6 million a year between 1974 and 1979, twice the average over our period in office, and in the last 12 months, the number of days lost has fallen to just 0·8 million. That makes Labour's grand total so far two. Travaillistes: deux points.

I come to our achievements, and I begin with growth. Excluding North sea oil, the economy has grown by 1·9 per cent. a year under Conservative rule. It grew by 1·2 per cent. under Labour. In manufacturing productivity, throughout our term in office it has grown by 3·6 per cent. a year, three times as fast as under Labour. The number of new businesses trading, after all mergers and closures, has increased by 41,000 a year under us, twice the rate that they grew under Labour. The disparity in the case of self-employment is even greater. The ranks of the self-employed have risen by 126,000 every year since 1979. Under Labour they fell by 23,000 a year.

Under the Government, the average increase in real take-home pay for a man on average earnings with two children has been 2·4 per cent. a year. Under the last Labour Government, it was just 0·1 per cent a year. That means that, since 1979, the standard of living of the average man has gone up 37 per cent. but under Labour it rose by less than 1 per cent. That is the price that ordinary people pay when all the growth of the economy is channelled into increased public spending. That is the policy that Labour pursued between 1974 and 1979, and that is what it threatens us with again.

Let me recap on my scoreboard: Labour—two; Conservative—5. Labour easily beat us on inflation and strikes, but we beat Labour on growth, manufacturing productivity, business start ups, self-employment, and standard of living.

The Government have delivered not just for one year but over a period of 12 years. We have delivered a stronger economy, a massive increase in the number of firms, and a substantially higher standard of living. That is a record to be proud of. It is based on sound policies that will ensure growth in the 1990s. Our record will deliver a fourth election victory to our party, and socialism will never begin to challenge it.

6.12 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): No one would believe from the Secretary of State's speech that the Government have been in office for 12 years—and are presiding over massive unemployment and a huge reduction in manufacturing. The Secretary of State has no policy to deal with those problems. He analyses what he assumes to be Labour's policy. We shall tell him what our policy is when we start to implement it under the next Labour Government.

The Secretary of State's speech was outrageous. Faced with the largest increase in unemployment, the decline in manufacturing industry, and the closures that are taking place, he has a duty to the country to say in straightforward language what the Government intend to do and to explain their policy. However, he did nothing of the sort. Rather, his speech contained only bluff and schoolboy politics.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Orme: No, I shall not. I have just started. I will give way later.

Many years ago, Salford was a large engineering city, but it has experienced an unbelievable decline in manufacturing. Only 10 days ago, a firm told me that it employed more than 100 people in my constituency. Its work force was highly skilled and the company had overseas orders that it wanted to develop. Its employees had agreed not to take a wage increase, unlike some directors of large companies. Well over 100 jobs are at stake in that firm. If it closes because of a cash flow problem, with the banks calling in their money—some £100,000—about 140 workers will be thrown on the dole and will never work in industry again, despite the first-class product manufactured by that company. What will that cost the nation?

The events taking place within that firm are a mirror image of what is now taking place throughout our society. I wrote to the Chancellor about the issue. I saw the interview of the Chancellor on the David Frost programme, when he said that he would talk to the chairmen of the banks. The Barclays bank advertisement says that it is in favour of helping small businesses. I want to see some evidence of that. I want the banks to take action in favour of the firm to which I referred and many other firms in constituencies of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Conservative Members know the reality of the situation.

In north-west England there has been a 34·5 per cent. decline in manufacturing industry since 1979—the largest percentage fall experienced by any region in the United Kingdom. The number of male employees alone fell by 274,000. Where are we to get the manufacturing sector that will create the wealth to give our 60 million people the standard of living that they demand?

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On the question of replacing manufacturing jobs, has the right hon. Gentleman heard about the remark of the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), today? She said that jobs in manufacturing can be replaced by jobs in gardening. What price does the right hon. Gentleman think the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the current Prime Minister would pay to keep the former Prime Minister quiet?

Mr. Orme: I am not surprised to hear what the previous Prime Minister said.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I notice that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is seeking assistance from the Minister's aide from the Box. I do not think that that is in order. If it is, I assume that we can all go to the Box for information on any matter that arises in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know nothing about the Box to which the hon. Gentleman refers. It does not exist as far as the Chair is concerned.

Mr. Orme: When the Chancellor was asked, on the David Frost programme, where the recovery might come from, he referred to the building industry and other areas, but not to manufacturing.

[Mr. Orme]

Many of my hon. Friends will be aware of what is happening in the north-west. As the recession worsens, companies are cutting jobs or even closing down. Job losses announced in the past few months include those at British Aerospace, which is to close its military aircraft plants at Preston and at Kingston, Surrey, with a loss of 5,000 jobs. At the manufacturing facility at Lostock, Lancashire, 620 jobs are to go, and 370 jobs are being axed at Woodford, near Manchester. Cammell Laird cut 115 jobs on Merseyside. Reports predict that up to 1,000 production jobs will go at Ford's Halewood site on Merseyside over the next few months.

Following the closure of the Bass brewery at Preston Brook, near Runcorn, Cheshire, 430 people are to be made redundant. Rolls-Royce motors is to cut its Crewe work force by 340. The Tootal textile group is closing its factory in Farnworth, Lancashire, with a loss of 148 jobs. At Manchester airport, 300 to 400 jobs are threatened at Dan Air. ICI is threatened with takeover by Hanson. I should have thought that the Secretary of State would be concerned that one of the major manufacturing units of the United Kingdom, or even of the world, could be emasculated and put out of action by the asset stripping of Hanson. The problem is that yet worse figures will follow the job losses that have been announced today.

It is no good the Barclays bank chairman saying, in the famous advertisment that is in the press today, that the major banks are in favour of assisting small businesses. Evidence shows that this is not so. This would not happen in Japan, Germany or the United States, but it happens in the United Kingdom because there is no concern for the manufacturing industry. I have spent a lifetime working in manufacturing industry and I know that it has always been seen as a poor relation, although it created the wealth that made Britain a leading country.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): The right hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point. Is he aware that that is compounded by the fact that the Japanese, American and German Governments support their major corporations far more vigorously than we do? Here, we spend so much time thinking about small businesses that we tend to forget the important interests of our major companies.

Mr. Orme: I take that point, but we should be concerned about all industry. We need small and medium-sized industries as well as large industries, and large industries have been diminished as well.

People in the machine tool industry have told me that orders for the industry are down by 46 per cent. and that overall investment is down by 22 per cent. in the first quarter. That tells it all. The machine tool industry led the world. I have worked in it, and I know what it is like. It no longer leads the world because it has been overtaken by the Japanese, the French, the Americans, the Germans and many others. If ever there was a time when the industry needed support, it is now. The industry is made of medium and small firms, many of which are high-tech.

To illustrate the point made by the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), I shall use the example of British Aerospace. It is the largest industrial manufacturing employer in the United Kingdom, employing about 130,000 people directly, and tens of hundreds of thousands indirectly. The Government have no policy on British Aerospace. On Tuesday 11 June, a survey on British Aerospace in the *Financial Times* said:

"the industry is having to adjust to a slump in both its commercial and defence sectors."

I know that things are changing, not least in the defence world, and that there is recession in the commercial world. I have spoken to both workers and management, and they are crying out for a more positive Government policy to assist them, but the Secretary of State has turned away. He has said that this is a matter for market forces. If market forces were allowed to run riot, we would have no aircraft manufacturing industry left. We have seen television, car manufacturing and other industries go. The British aircraft building industry is next unless the Government are prepared to support it.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): The right hon. Gentleman is trying to convey the impression that British Aerospace, Britain's largest manufacturing company, is clapped out. If that is the case, why did British Aerospace have record profits last year, and why is it that this year it has its most valuable ever order book, at £11·8 billion?

Mr. Orme: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would listen to what I am saying. I did not say that the industry was clapped out. I said that it was one of our major high-tech industries.

British Aerospace recently announced large planned reductions in its work force, both in the military and civil divisions, some of which will result in redundancies in the north-west and in the south of England. These include reductions of 675 workers at Chadderton works, 375 at Woodford, 1,470 at Hatfield, 60 in Bristol, 2,200 at British Aerospace (Dynamics), the missile production division, 620 at the Lostock factory in Lancashire, 500 at Stevenage in Hertfordshire and 1,300 at Bristol. About 5,000 will be lost in the next three years, following cuts in both Preston and Kingston-upon-Thames.

This is a major industry. I know that we need to take the peace dividend into account, but both the workers and the management want to co-operate with this or any Government to ensure that the industry has a basis from which it can survive and expand. Instead, it gets no support from the Government. If we sit back and watch the industry disintegrate, it will be a disaster for the country. If that happens, we shall not have the manufacturing capacity to challenge our main competitors. We shall then become a second-rate country.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, in a recent meeting, Mr. Roland Smith expressed concern about the future of British Aerospace? He told us that the nation must make up its mind whether it wants to continue to have an aircraft industry, or whether the business should go to Germany instead.

Mr. Orme: The airbus is about to come on stream. Important decisions must be made both in the commercial and the defence sectors. I recognise that they will be difficult decisions, and I am not trying to gloss over that fact. However, we should be looking at the problem as a nation. The Government should be involved both in measures to overcome it and in the necessary planning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) made constructive proposals. Whether I believed in them or not, I wish that the Secretary of State

had at least made some proposals. We have nothing from him. We need a fresh approach. High interest rates, training and investment, the exchange rate and the lack of a national policy are all important factors. We are debating the future of the United Kingdom in the 1990s and beyond. We must resolve the problem and ensure that the nation prospers, with all the necessary growth and expenditure. If we do not do something about it, whatever party is in power, we shall not have the capacity to produce the standard of living that people demand. The Government's policy is unbelievable. I hope that the British people will listen to this important debate so that they know what the answers are.

6.29 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I followed the speech by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) with great interest. He was reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) that British Aerospace has a record order book. We do industry no good by trying to talk down a successful company.

All that one can say about the speech by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) is that it was a good knockabout speech. He spent most of the time in knockabout and it was only as a postscript that he mentioned one or two points such as more training, and more research and development. Not once would he answer the question of where the money would come from. We can all have targets and ideas, but, in the last resort, the question is where the cash will come from. As hon. Members know, the Labour party's top priority seems to be to increase pensions and child benefit. It is all very well for them to talk about targets, but we and the country are entitled to know where the cash will come from.

As we entered the 1990s, the supply side of the economy was good and in far better shape than it was in 1980. Today we compare with the best. I accept that there is a drop in investment. We start from a high level of investment. Investment will come from industry when it feels that there is a product that it can make—with new machinery or whatever—which is competitive.

We have been debating business and the help that we can give to the general economy. We should remember that inflation has come down from well over 10 per cent. to 6·4 per cent. and I am confident that when the figures come out tomorrow, we shall see that inflation has come down to under 6 per cent. Inflation will continue to come down, which will assist not only business, but everyone in the community. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, with inflation coming down, interest rates will follow. We have already seen the base rate come down from 15 to 11·5 per cent. and we all hope that it will continue to come down with inflation.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Salford, East that as the Chancellor of the Exchequer has reduced the base rate by 3·5 per cent., the reduction should be passed on to the local business man, whether big or small. The Chancellor has not reduced interest rates to increase the banks' profits. He has reduced interest rates following the reduction in inflation to help business and to help us become increasingly competitive. We must find a solution to the problem for the sake of the small business man and the large business man. I have raised the matter with the Governor of the Bank of England and I am waiting for his reply.

The small business man also suffers from some of the charges that banks impose when a loan is being renegotiated or when an overdraft is increased. Business men are suffering from a cash flow problem. We must soon consider the problem of payment of debt, especially from large companies to small companies. We should consider whether it should be mandatory for interest to be paid by the person who owes the money after a stated period, whether 28 days, 40 days or whatever. Some large companies are late in paying.

We must take the question of bank interest out of the political arena. My right hon. Friend would be well advised to get the British Bankers Association, which covers all the clearing banks and all the merchant banks, to exercise influence on the banks.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said nothing about the good things in our economy and about our achievements. In the short term, there are temporary difficulties—nobody could deny that—but we must look at the economic long term. In the 1950s and even in the 1960s, we were the poor relation in Europe and we were bottom of every economic league. Now we are not——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: At least we paid our way in the world.

Sir William Clark: I must remind the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that it was because of socialist policies that we were bottom of the league in Europe. One needs only to look around the world. The world is rejecting left-wing policies. Socialism ruined Africa, Russia, the Baltic and all the other iron curtain countries. Those countries are now in a desperate state, yet the Labour party advocates similar policies for us.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): My right hon. Friend said that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) did not mention any good news. He mentioned one point which his right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) also mentioned. They pooh-poohed the fact that there has been an uplift in the amount of housing development started recently. Labour Members complain about a lack of manufacturing and a lack of investment. Does my right hon. Friend accept that investment in housing is investment? Does he also accept that housing requires a lot of manufacturing—the manufacture of machinery, of timber frames, of bricks, of pipes and of all the parts that go into a dwelling including carpeting and finishing?

Sir William Clark: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. There is no doubt that if the building industry improves, so will all the other industries associated with building.

We must look at the Government's record. There are well over 400,000 more firms today than there were in 1979. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the number of self-employed is over 3·25 million, up by 70 per cent. compared with 1979. That must be good.

The small firms have created well over 1 million jobs and that is an achievement.

Hon. Members have talked about helping business. We need only look at the actions of successive Chancellors of the Exchequer. In 1979, corporation tax was 52 per cent.; today for large companies it is only 42 per cent. In 1979, corporation tax for small companies was 42 per cent.; today it is 25 per cent. That is a great help for small businesses. Small businesses invariably grow into big

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businesses and one must start small if one is going into high technology and innovation, especially in communications.

Income tax has come down. The standard rate has fallen from 33 to 25 per cent. and the top rate from 83 to 40 per cent. The tax on investment income has come down from 98 to 40 per cent. The welcome increase in the threshold for VAT has also helped business men. However, I sound a note of caution. Some of the fines imposed for genuine mistakes, whether in VAT or in pay-as-you-earn, are draconian and that point should be examined. However, we all welcome the quarterly payment by small businesses of PAYE and national insurance contributions. The Government have also helped to cut form filling. Many thousands of different forms are no longer needed.

The Labour party will not tell us where the money is to come from. There are only three ways in which we can get the money: first, by increasing taxation; secondly, by borrowing it; and thirdly, by printing it. During the past three years, the Government have repaid the national debt to the tune of £26 billion. That is quite a good achievement and saves a servicing charge of about £2 billion to £3 billion a year, which is now available for extra spending in the public sector.

We know that, under a Labour Government, income tax would go up to at least 59 per cent. One of the other proposals that the Labour party has slipped in is that investments worth more than £3,000 would cost the investor an extra 9 per cent. on top of the normal tax. The Labour party also intends to reform the trade unions, so that we would be back in the bad old days when the trade union bosses ran the economy.

The Labour party would cut interest rates. I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reminded the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that, during the 1987-88 crash, when we now know, with hindsight, that interest rates were reduced too rapidly, the Labour party was asking for extra cuts. Such cuts would have compounded the problems for which it now criticises us. If we took the advice of the shadow Chancellor and the Labour party and cut interest rates by a substantial amount tomorrow, there might be a run on sterling, which would be catastrophic. If the Labour party ever became the Government and cut interest rates, the resulting collapse of sterling would be serious for this country.

It has been said that the Labour party intends to bring in a job tax. How would that help the economy or reduce unemployment? The Labour party says that it will generate £20 billion more in revenue, but the Leader of the Opposition seems confused about how that will happen. He has overlooked the fact that, in the next three years, the forecast for this Government's spending is about £38 billion. Is the £20 billion to be on top of the £38 billion? I was delighted that, on the "Today" programme on 13 May, the shadow Chancellor said that the £20 billion would not be an addition—presumably, it would be a substitute. I should not have thought that all those irresponsible, bogus promises from the Opposition could hoodwink the general public. The Labour party talks about a minimum wage, which in itself would create more and more unemployment.

There are signs that the recession is coming to an end. I do not know whether hon. Members have read the words of Christopher Johnson, the chief economic adviser to Lloyd's. He reckons that the recovery has already started. David Kern, the chief economic adviser to the National Westminster bank, wrote in April that the recession was at its lowest point. If that were so, from then on, the recession must have been coming to an end. I agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that the recession was not caused by the Gulf war—everyone accepts that. But it has to be admitted that the Gulf war contributed towards it, particularly as it affected our tourist industry and consequently our balance of payments and our overseas deficit.

The economy is soundly based——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Ah!

Sir William Clark: The hon. Gentleman is good at intervening from a sedentary position and more or less, to use the jargon, barracking, but, as the right hon. Member for Salford, East said, this is an important debate and should not be treated lightly, as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby appears to be doing.

There has been a complete transformation of the economy since 1979. We have only to look at the number of shareholders and home owners, and the level of real wages. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned the real wages of the average family—a married man, the sole earner, in a family with two children. In real terms, his earnings have risen by 37 per cent.

As so many party poltical points are being made, we are in danger of talking too much doom and gloom. I am absolutely convinced that the constant talk of doom and gloom, and repetition that this country is flat broke do us no good. My view is shared in many parts of the City and industry. Our economy is extremely sound and we should be shouting about our achievements, not running ourselves down

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir William Clark: No, I am just finishing.

I think that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is right to resist the siren calls for a rapid cut in interest rates. Inflation is coming down and I think that tomorrow's figures will be extremely encouraging. We should not take panic measures, but should stay on our present course. We have control of public expenditure and are getting inflation under control—a recipe for future prosperity.

6.45 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I listened with great care to the right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and I agree that it would be wrong to peddle doom and gloom, and create pessimism about the prospects of British industry. However, if the Right hon. Gentleman believes that his optimism, which is shared in some parts of the City, is filtering its way through to people working in factories around the country, and to those in commerce and industry outside the City of London, he is making a fundamental mistake. That mistake is also being made by many others in the Conservative party who believe that their policies are credible to the public at large.

I shall open my argument with some evidence from a source that has already been mentioned: the machine tool

industry. The evidence has been provided by the Machine Tools Technologies Association and puts the Government's policies into their proper context. The machine tool industry is at the centre of manufacturing industry, no part of which operates without its innovations. The machine tool industry is made up largely of small to medium-sized enterprises, the sort of businesses which are the blueprint of the philosophy of Conservative economic strategy—at least, as we used to hear it from the previous Prime Minister.

The machine tool industry has been innovative and has provided vital overseas earnings. The economic growth in the 1980s, for which the Government claim sole credit, is very much based on the achievements of the machine tool industry. It is precisely companies such as those in that industry that are bearing the brunt of the Government's current policy. The recently issued three-month and 12-month sales and order figures for the industry show a desperate decline in orders for advanced technology made by that industry. The overall trend is disastrous. We have already heard that, according to the Central Statistical Office, orders for the first quarter of this year were down 46 per cent. on the first quarter of last year. There has been a decline in sales from £30·5 million a year ago to £23 million in March 1991—a fall in sales of more than 23 per cent. in less than a year.

There was also a decline in investment in plant and machinery of 22 per cent. in the first quarter of 1991. What better measure of confidence or lack of confidence within the industry is there than the measure of its investment? When we hear that the investment in plant and machinery made by a vital industry such as the machine tool manufacturing industry has declined by nearly a quarter in the first quarter of this year, we have something to worry about.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I just wanted to add to the hon. and learned Gentleman's statement, with which I absolutely agree. When a number of Labour Members met the association this lunchtime, its president said that if things continued at their present rate, in six to nine months there would not be a machine tool industry.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman reinforces my point. That industry's figures tell the story of what has happened recently under the present Government. One sees the symptoms reflected dramatically throughout the United Kingdom. Only 20 years ago, my own country of Wales was a major producer of coal, steel, and food. Two of those industries—coal and steel—are virtually redundant, and agriculture daily faces the threat of a similar decline. Every day, some of my farming constituents go out of business.

Where, 20 years ago, men produced steel plate and fuel for heavy industry, in a nation famed for its design and innovative skills, today their children assemble typewriters and televisions designed on the other side of the world. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), apparently believes that the future lies in gardening. While there is no doubt that the United Kingdom leads the world in gardening, it is not enough to build an economy on.

Wales welcomes the new industries that have come there—often from abroad—but they are evidence of the failure of successive Government policies for indigenous manufacturing industry. We now have to buy the design, components, manufacturing techniques, and even the industrial practices from the other side of the world, to provide jobs for people in this country's industrial areas.

The whole culture and ethical framework within which business operates has changed since 1979. To be fair, the Government have encouraged new business, but their efforts have not borne much fruit in terms of long-term employment or security. For every Body Shop, there are hundreds of bankruptcies. I was shocked to see for the first time last week, while travelling by Underground, an advertisement in a carriage for a firm of liquidators, inviting people in real trouble with their businesses to use that firm's skills. It is extraordinary that we should now find advertisements on the tube for liquidation experts. One of the best careers that right hon. and hon. Members can recommend to young people looking for lucrative employment——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Is the legal profession, as a barrister.

Mr. Carlile: —is liquidation, sadly. It is much more profitable than being a barrister.

Liquidations and bankruptcies are at shocking, record levels, and every one of them means bad debts for innocent and hard-working people. They often drag suppliers themselves into liquidation or bankruptcy. There are also huge losses to the Inland Revenue. When the Minister replies, perhaps he will tell the House how much money has been lost to the Inland Revenue and to Customs and Excise as a result of liquidations and bankruptcies, with tax remaining unpaid, since the present Government have been in office.

Many believe that an atmosphere of greed has led to increasing fraud, which has besmirched the reputation of business, from the highest to the lowest levels. The City of London used to be a byword for integrity, which was taken for granted. Sadly, that is no longer so. The phoenix syndrome of here today, gone tomorrow, businesses has spread. For many people who deal with companies, the term "Limited" should not be a sign of commercial credibility but a clear warning that they may not get paid.

More bills remain unpaid by companies today than ever before. Despite the blandishments of the right hon. Member for Croydon, South, who puts the case very clearly, the Government refuse to introduce statutory interest for late payment of bills. Many other countries in western Europe have such legislation, and it works. Perhaps it would embarrass the Government. It is the experience of those in the professions who undertake work for the Government—including my own, the legal profession—that the Government are a very slow payer of bills. They often pay late, and they almost always pay reluctantly. I invite the Government clearly to state that they will set an example in future, by paying their creditors quickly, and will create an atmosphere in which bills paid late carry interest, to encourage settlement on time.

We heard something of an argument between members of the Government and Labour Front Benchers as to who takes a hands-on and who takes a hands-off approach. Under the present Secretary of State and the other Ministers in the very dry Department that he runs, it has been customary to say that it is right to keep one's hands off business and to leave things to the market. However,

[Mr. Carlile]

the Department of Trade and Industry's attitude is even more distant than that. In truth, it has been a case of, "Look, no hands—and the devil take the hindmost."

The Government seem to be avoiding dealing with the problems of industry while beating their breast and looking for a conscience in respect of what to do about Europe. One is tempted to take the view of this Government that, if one gives them enough Europe, they will hang themselves. While having that inner conflict, the Government have allowed business confidence to fall dismally and daily. Nowhere is that more evident than among small businesses.

If small businesses—the seeds from which big manufacturing plants grow—do not have the confidence to go to their bankers and to borrow, to be innovative and imaginative, there is no hope for our manufacturing industry. In my constituency and throughout rural Wales, many small businesses have been assisted by organisations such as the Development Board for Rural Wales. Personal taxes have declined, and the Government lay great store by that. However, the claim that the Government's fiscal policies have eased the burden of small businesses is laughable. Value added tax is up. Business rates are up through the roof. Interest rates are up. The tax on company cars, which is essential for any business in a rural area, is also up. That is all part of a package of increased costs to industry that small businesses are finding it extremely difficult to bear.

Instead of merely worrying about paying their taxes, as they used to do, many small businesses live in terror of the bank manager because of high interest rates. Today's press release and advertisement from the chairman of Barclays Bank is welcome, but we wait to see their content put into practice. The Government must also help. It is not enough for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call in bank chairmen and give them a dressing down.

The Government have elevated non-intervention to a shibboleth, while ignoring evidence from France and elsewhere that central Government can give considerable assistance to industry without interfering in its management. The Government should serve as an agent, consultant and potentiator, in informing industry of new markets and opportunities, which they should cajole and entice industry to seize—but they do not. The Government appear to be determined not to assist industry even in respect of some exports, as we can see from their action in respect of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

The future of British industry, small and large, is surely in Europe. We serve ourselves ill by cribbing about a single currency. Business and the City clearly want one. The public do not feel strongly, although some members of the Conservative party clearly do. What does it matter if a new unit of currency is devised? Why cannot it be called the pound, franc, or lira, according to the country in which it is spent? Why do the Government want to continue filling the coffers of currency dealers with commission that has no logical justification in what is supposed to be an economic community?

Why is it that, if one sets off round the Community with £100 and simply changes it without spending it, one comes back to Britain at the end of the tour with about £70, £30 simply having gone to the money changers? That makes no sense at all. The Government strongly underestimated the confidence that the creation of an independent central bank would engender alongside the acceptance of a common currency for Europe.

The Government must act. The explosion of pessimism in manufacturing industry was fuelled today by the prediction of a 70 per cent. increase in long-term unemployment within the next year or so. For the Government to proclaim success for their economic and employment policies, as they have done today, is surprising.

It is time to recognise that good industrial policy starts in the schools, in the education and training of young people in the skills that are needed in manufacturing industry. It starts by creating an atmosphere in which careers teachers would not tell the brightest and best to go into accountancy, law, politics or merchant banking but one in which careers teachers would, as happens in France, tell such people to go into manufacturing industry where they will have a chance as an engineer, scientist or a manager to rise to the top in industry and in the nation.

We need to commit ourselves to 1992 in a way which will ensure that our manufacturing industry is in the lead in Europe, not simply apologising, as the Government appear to do, for being in Europe.

We cannot glean much confidence from the Labour party's attitude to Europe. I shall not read the Leader of the Opposition's 228-word sentence of yesterday, which was described as a "huge octopus squirting ink" by one language expert. An Oxford professor said:

"It needs translating into English".

I hope that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) will tell us in a few short words, with an occasional subject, verb and object, what all that means. I invite her to tell us what the Labour party's policy is on Europe. In the light of what the Leader of the Opposition said Britain, and particularly manufacturing industry, can have no real confidence that the Labour party has any policy on the EC upon which it is united. There are policies within the Labour party, but as far as I can see there are many more than two.

British manufacturing industry has a great deal to worry about, because the Conservative and Labour parties are afraid of Europe. It is time that we stopped being afraid of Europe. It is time that we started to play a positive role in shaping what promises to be the greatest ever market known for manufacturing industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind the House that, between now and 10 minutes to 9 o'clock, speeches should last no longer than 10 minutes.

7.3 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has considered the Government's and the Opposition's policies towards Europe and commended the policies adhered to by his party.

The Government will be negotiating on behalf of Britain against a single currency at the intergovernmental conferences taking place during the next few months, not because they see a problem with the changing of money into different currencies—last year, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out the possibility of a common

currency, the possibility of the hard ecu, which would enable the hon. and learned Gentleman to have his way on such transactions—but because they will not allow sovereignty and the management of the economy and our currency to pass to Europe. That is what the debate is about, and that is what the hon. and learned Gentleman does not appear to understand.

However, to be fair to his party, it has made it clear that it wants to see and does not fear the transfer of power from an elected body, the national Parliament, to officials in Europe. However, Conservative Members are clear. We want to make sure that, while taking advantage of that vast free common market, with all the advantages of 1992, there must nevertheless be democracy and accountability to the House of Commons.

But the hon. and learned Gentleman was right to challenge the Labour party in the way that he did and the Leader of the Opposition's use of such an extraordinary number of words. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) had little to say about Europe, but he ought to get to grips with it for the simple reason that the Labour party's policies include a national investment bank, financial support for nationalised industries and a greater emphasis on public subsidy through regional policy. The hon. Gentleman should turn up article 92(1) of the treaty of Rome because he will find that, as a general rule, all Government aid to business is forbidden. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to say whether, in his view, Labour's industrial programme would be permitted by the EC. Labour's industrial policies have been criticised on many counts.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall give way in a moment, because I have a question for the hon. Lady which she can answer, and after the next sentence or two, it will be most appropriate for me to give way.

"Most of the weapons used in the past by Labour and advocated in the first part of the policy review are ruled out by the EC. Direct aid to, or support for, industry or investment; a regional policy, which finances jobs; public support on research and development; financial support for nationalised industries; public purchasing policies designed to encourage industry and modernisation; a National Investment Bank providing long-term, low-cost finance for industries which compete with Europe's; all these are ruled out."

If the hon. Lady is not prepared to take that from me, she had better take it from her hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), because he used those words on 6 October 1989 in *Tribune*. I give way to the hon. Lady to ask her to answer the hon. Gentleman's point.

Ms. Quin: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has given way, presumably in response to my earlier request for him to do so. I refer him to the European Commission's publication on the amount of state aid given by different countries in the EC which is deemed to be compatible in article 92 of the treaty. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has not read the treaty very carefully, nor has he looked at the statistics in the European Commission's publication. It is clear that a variety of state and regional aids are authorised by the European Commission as long as they meet the European criteria.

Mr. Brown: It sounds to me as though the hon. Lady had better take that matter up with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, whose views on the EC I respect. He has been consistent ever since he came to the House of Commons. She may accuse me of not understanding the treaty of Rome, but the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has understood it ever since he came to the House in 1975. I suggest that the hon. Lady looks at what he said in *Tribune* and has a little debate with him.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East referred to the hypothetical question of ICI and Hanson. The Labour party seems to be making a great meal of this, which I cannot understand. There is no bid to take over ICI and, in any event, such a takeover would be a matter for the EC, not my right hon. Friend Secretary of State. I am not the Secretary State, and I do not have to concern myself with fettering any decisions on the matter——

Mr. Soames: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brown: No. The 10-minute rule is in operation, and I do not have much time.

Some Opposition Members seem to think that ICI is good and Hanson is bad.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brown: I caution the hon. Gentleman, with whom I have a lot in common. I suggest that he looks at my constituency, which adjoins his. Many of the work force in Brigg and Cleethorpes work in his constituency and vice versa. I remind him that, when I first became the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Brigg and Scunthorpe, it contained a chemical concern called Albright and Wilson, which was taken over by ICI and became Britag, which was wholly owned by ICI and employed many people. It was the largest employer in the town of Barton-upon-Humber in my constituency.

A few miles down the road in my new constituency, which came into being after the 1983 boundary changes, was the old Laporte company, which was taken over by SCM Chemicals, which was in turn taken over by Hanson. I am able to say that I have had experience of two chemical factories—the largest employer of labour in the Cleethorpes area of my constituency, SCM, which is owned by Hanson, and the other factory which is owned by ICI.

I have to report that the ICI factory no longer exists; it has been razed to the ground, there have been redundancies, and there was no investment. The whole thing was a flop and a failure, whereas SCM, which manufactures titanium dioxide, competes alongside the ICI-run dioxide factory in the constituency of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. There has been massive investment in SCM in the past few years, and it is a very successful company.

I shall shed no tears if the business disciplines of the Hanson group of companies should be extended into this country's chemical industry, and I make no apology for saying so.

I want to nail this business about the minimum wage, which the Opposition constantly fudge. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East pulled me up and told me that he had not said that the imposition of a minimum wage would cause any more unemployment. Today he is saying that the imposition of a minimum wage will result in no unemployment. Surely he cannot ignore the Fabian Society document. I was pulled up on a point of order for consulting my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Private

[Mr. Brown]

Secretary, who went to the Box on my behalf to find out whether they had a copy of the Fabian Society document. I had forgotten that I am no longer a Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry, so I apologise to the House and to the hon. Member who raised the point of order. Unfortunately, they do not have a copy of the document. However, it is quite clear that in the society's view there is the possibility of up to 880,000 jobs being lost by the imposition of the minimum wage.

If the Labour shadow Front-Bench spokesman will not take that from the Fabian Society or from me, I suggest that he consults the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). In 1984 he clearly said, along with Gavin Laird, that the minimum wage would cost jobs.

Only the Conservative Government have a coherent industrial policy.

7.13 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) used some interesting words—

"The economy is soundly based."

In that case, what on earth are the Government doing by delaying the election? Why are they so hesitant? If the economy is soundly based what other factor is deterring them from facing the electorate? The answer is quite simple—the right hon. Gentleman is wrong.

For some months, the Government have been in a state of panic. Any Government who get rid of a Prime Minister who has served them for so many years and gets 204 votes and is replaced by a Prime Minister with 185 votes are obviously a Government in panic. They would not have done it had they thought that they could have won a general election with her. Fear of the general election is perpetually in the minds of right hon. and hon. Members. That is a hard fact.

The public's impact upon the Government, not merely in terms of opinion polls, but in the recent by-election in Monmouth and the views expressed in the responsible press are all factors which have put the Government in a state of fear—a state which they have not experienced for years.

The election has only one significance, no matter how the figures are juggled or how many party political points are made; the general public only want to read and hear one thing and that is the facts of the matter at the moment. The public are not interested in history tutorials; they are not interested in the conjectures of the Conservative party about what a Labour Government might do because the Conservatives have no original arguments of their own. The electorate are concerned with how they are affected at the moment.

Let us consider some of the present warning signals. In another place, the Select Committee on Science and Technology, which has a majority of Conservative members, said in its report a few weeks ago:

"If the present policies persist we will risk not having anymore a British owned manufacturing industry."

Then it added the fatal words:

"This Government have no strategy for industry, no policy for industry and none in the national interest."

I should have thought that that opinion is worth considering, bearing in mind the fact that there are people with experience in the other place and that the preponderance of the membership are influential Conservatives.

Have the Government not listened to the present warnings by the Confederation of British Industry? I choose those authorities with a degree of selectivity that is not unreasonable. As recently as today, my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) reported that the machine tool industry—once the pride of British industry and the feedstock of our manufacturing—is virtually crippled. A responsible chairman says that, unless something is done, the position will be desperate in a few months' time.

Is the Conservative party not prepared to listen at all? Are they going to sit there like glorified Walter Mittys hoping that something will turn up?

The gentlest words that I can find to describe the situation—although I would like to use stronger words—are political criminality. Consider the Sunderland ship-building yard. The present Secretary of State for Social Services—a much nicer chap than the present Secretary of State for Education and Science—was kept in the dark about what Lord Young, who was once at the Department of Trade and Industry, and his underling, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, had contrived. That great ambassador for the United Kingdom, Commissioner Leon Brittan—one of the holy trinity of conspirators—devised, virtually by fraudulent action, that men working in the Sunderland shipyard were not going to be allowed to work and everyone knew it. Remarkably, the Prime Minister, who served the Conservative party so well, has spoken in favour of the Sunderland shipyard—the most modern in Europe. The Government said that one could do anything with it except build ships there. How crazy.

We have some other little industries to think about: the steel industry, for example. Once upon a time, it was responsible for 20 per cent. of steel making in Europe; since then, it has been continually whittled down, and has become almost insignificant. If a balance sheet is in the black, we call that success. If the Government had gone much further, we would have no steel industry at all—just a balance sheet showing no liabilities and no revenue.

The coal industry is another example. It is calculated that, four or five years from now, about 15 pits will be left. The motion, however, refers to manufacturing industry. Let me give Conservative Members some figures whose significance they may then wish to ponder.

In 1979, 410,000 people were employed in manufacturing industries in the northern region. By December last year, the number had fallen to 270,000—a loss of 140,000 jobs in a decade, or a 34 per cent. cut. In 1979, a total of 7,115,000 people were employed in manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom as a whole; now the number is only 4 million. That is a shortfall of 29 per cent. The number of people employed in the northern region in 1979 has now been cut by one third. The north has experienced the largest loss of employment in the country.

Let us now compare the number of manufacturing employees, in the northern region and nationally, with the total number of employees in the region and the country as a whole. Manufacturing employment has fallen by more than 25 per cent; in one instance, the figure is 30 per cent.

That is a dramatic development. Manufacturing industry is sliding into oblivion. Conservative Members

say that everything is all right, and that the economy is soundly based. How can that be so? Manufacturing industry is the lifeblood of the nation. At one time, we used to say, "Export or die."

People talk fiddlesticks about Europe in the House. I wish that the term "common market" had never been coined. We have no common market; it is a political conspiracy. "Common trading market" would make sense. Let us not be diverted from the terms of the notion, however. Manufacturing industry has been sliding into a state of remarkable weakness. Anyone could tell the House that, when a manufacturing base has been cut by 30 per cent. in 10 years, the country is experiencing a crisis.

The House knows full well——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman's time is up.

7.23 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) harked back to the old days of labour-intensive manufacturing industry. I fear that those days will never come back, and I think that the hon. Gentleman is mistaken to imagine that they ever could or should. The world has moved on with the introduction of new technology; in Scotland, for instance, more people are now employed in the electronic industries than in the traditional coal, steel and shipbuilding industries. I do not regret that: it is important for Britain to be at the forefront of modern industrial technology.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Churchill: I am sorry, but I cannot do so, given the time limitation.

As one who has the privilege to represent Trafford Park —still the biggest industrial complex in the United Kingdom—I can only tell the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that, under Labour, the devastation of jobs there was colossal.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): That is not true.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but in the late 1960s, under a Labour Government, more than 15,000 jobs were lost in Trafford Park in the five years before I was elected to represent Stretford in 1970.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, says that he would like an industrial strategy to be developed for this country. Let me tell him that Trafford Park and other established industrial areas suffered bitterly from his party's so-called industrial strategy. Labour's gerrymandering of industrial development certificates—which no doubt a new Labour Government would try to bring back —was positively ruthless, and caused thousands upon thousands of job losses in the traditional industrial manufacturing areas.

Let me give just one example. When Kelloggs, a major employer in Trafford Park, wanted to expand under the Wilson Government, it was told that it could not do so in Trafford Park. When the company asked where it could expand, the answer that came back from Whitehall was "Huyton". I wonder whose constituency that was. Thank goodness the United Kingdom does not have an industrial strategy like that today.

The opening speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was long on bombast and short on policy. He was full of rhetoric, but empty of cash or, indeed, any concrete measure to help the unemployed. By contrast, the present Government have been the friend of industry and small businesses, which have been relieved of vast numbers of unnecessary Government controls and a crippling tax burden.

This Government have rolled back the frontiers of state socialism and slashed taxation. They have been the friend of both the taxpayer and the consumer, transforming loss-making nationalised industries into profitable companies that can stand on their own feet. We do not need lectures from the Labour party—the party which brought Britain to economic disaster in the 1960s, and again in the 1970s; a party whose central philosophy of socialism, centralised planning and state control has repeatedly proved disastrous not only in this country but in every one of the eastern and central European nations, which have recently been privileged to have an opportunity to throw that policy, bag and baggage, on to the scrap heap of history where it belongs. Yet Labour now wants to bring back many of those same failed policies. The party seems to have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

Labour's most recent policy document, entitled "Modern Manufacturing Strength", promises a "rapid increase in investment". What a hollow sham that is revealed to be when we examine the record of previous Labour Governments who drove investment out of the country. The document speaks of a "national investment bank" to be

"run on strictly commercial lines"

If it is to be run on strictly commercial lines, what service can it provide that today's banks do not provide already?

The reality is this: Labour has no credible anti-inflation policy. A Labour Government would bring higher spending, which in turn would bring higher inflation. Labour government would mean higher borrowing—which would drive up interest rates—and higher taxes, which would put more firms out of business and drive away foreign investors. It will give power back to the union bosses, leading to more strikes and industrial disruption. Above all, the sword of Damocles will hang over vast sectors of industry—the threat of renationalisation.

The Labour policy review "Social Justice and Efficiency" states that local authorities will have a role to play in local industry under a Labour Government.

Mr. Lewis: I hope so.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman says that he hopes so. The possibility of loony left Labour councils being involved in the running of industry and commerce would be the ultimate nightmare. If it happened, it would cause disinvestment and would drive the likes of Nissan and Sony back to where they came from or, more likely, into the arms of one of our competitors in the European Community.

Labour's determination to introduce a national minimum wage would throw tens of thousands of low-paid people out of work, especially the disabled, the elderly, women and ethnic minorities. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has returned to his place. He advanced the absurd and false suggestion that Mr. Winston Churchill, when President of the Board of Trade in the Liberal Administration in 1908, favoured or introduced a national minimum wage. He did nothing of the sort. He was determined, rightly, to attack the problem

[Mr. Churchill]

of sweated labour. His Bill covered only 200,000 jobs, 140,000 of them for women and young girls. It had the support of the entire House of Commons—Conservative and Liberal Members.

With inflation falling fast and interest rates set to follow, it will not be long before the British economy moves into a new phase of expansion. When that happens, we will resume—as we did in the second half of the 1980s—our position as the leaders in job creation in the European Community. Until that happens, the Government must maintain their commitment to guarantee every school leaver a job or a training place, and I should welcome an assurance on that point.

The future under a Labour Government would mean economic catastrophe and disaster for this country. Under a Conservative Government—I have every confidence that a Conservative Government will be returned after the next election—we can resume the economic growth that occurred throughout the 1990s and there will be a rise to unprecedented living standards.

7.32 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am not sure who wrote the speech of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), but I suggest that the hon. Gentleman give it back. I do not think that it could have been written by one of his friends.

I thought that this was a serious debate. Only a short time is needed to highlight the problems in my constituency to see what we are really talking about. This highly successful, brilliant, economy-based Government who have produced this miracle of rejuvenation have rapidly changed my constituency. When the Conservative party came to power, Rolls-Royce provided consistent employment and produced high-quality cars. British Rail Engineering Ltd. made high-quality engines, carried out repairs on rolling stock from all over the world as well as Britain and employed large numbers of engineers. Other smaller engineering firms produced and supplied larger firms with high-quality parts. Many were involved in machine tools. Many of the women in my constituency were fully employed in the rag trade. The high-quality clothing they produced contributed large sums to this country's export earnings.

Today, far from a continuing pattern of employment, many people are on short-time working, or have lost their jobs or are likely to lose their jobs in the coming 12 months. Rolls-Royce has had to lay off people for weeks. Through one of its subsidiaries, it has had to close foundries and there is the considerable risk that it will lose more than the 340 jobs to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) referred. British Rail Engineering Ltd. has been sold off, as has the Royal Ordnance factory just outside my constituency.

The pattern for all privatised industries has been closely followed. First, an industry is sold. Then there are immediate job losses. After that, there is a change in the terms and conditions of the work force, sometimes brought about by unilateral changes in their contracts. Then there is a consistent pattern of increased wages for the directors and worse terms and conditions and redundancies for the people who have given many years of experience.

The Government have developed an even more interesting technique with the Royal Ordnance factory near my constituency. I believe that nearly 900 jobs have gone from the Royal Ordnance factory at Alsager near Radway Green. When I asked the Department of Employment to confirm that, I was told that it was a matter not for the House of Commons but for the director of the agency, who would write to me. In other words, in Crewe and Nantwich and in the areas that have always provided employment for it, not only are jobs consistently lost but they are hidden from sight. We have already lost many of the clothing factories, and we are losing many of the very small businesses.

During the past four months, small business men in my constituency who have not been able to deal with the increased demands made upon them by banks have been called in and, even though they have full order books and are providing high-quality produce, they have been told, "You will go into liquidation in some form or another." Many have come to me knowing that not only are their businesses at risk but their homes and families may be destroyed. It is extremely hypocritical of the clearing banks to take space in national newspapers to tell us that they care about British industry. They have one thing in common with the Government—as small business men know, their businesses are the subject of total lack of interest among Conservative politicians and those who serve them in the City of London.

There has been one guiding light in my constituency—the use of money provided by British Rail, not BREL, to create a development agency. The local authority has made a positive attempt to create new jobs and has spent considerable sums on building a new infrastructure.

For the Conservative Government, the privatisation programme has been almost entirely a matter of looking at factories as if they were a series of sites. If there is one claim that I would make for the Government, it is that they are an estate agents Government. Of course, they concern themselves not with homes but with selling off as many of our manufacturing factories as possible.

Crewe was built to be a home for manufacturing industry. No one could have demonstrated greater flexibility, greater imagination or greater commitment to work than the people of Crewe. Over many years, they have taken lower wages to achieve security, and to ensure that their jobs are safe. The payments that they have received from a Conservative Government are unemployment and disgraceful neglect. In the future, changes will occur, making Crewe virtually a dormitory area for many of the more affluent surrounding constituencies.

The fact that the Secretary of State was today unable to make a serious or considered speech in defence of British industry is a condemnation of the contempt with which the Conservative party treats the people of this country. The sooner the Conservative party is given the opportunity to consider its sins from the Opposition Benches, the happier the future of the nation will be.

7.40 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that neither of the Front Bench spokesmen made a particularly serious or considered speech about British industry. It is to the regret of the House that they both took so long to do it.

It is extraordinary that we can debate such an issue without any mention of the financial services sector, which makes such a major contribution to our economy. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Corporate Affairs will say a few words about that.

It is impossible to deny the real achievements and success of the Government's policies, which have led to an extraordinary and fundamental change in the structure of the British economy over the past 10 years, much of it for the better. None of us seeks to deny that at present we are going through a very rough patch. The reasons why the changes have occurred are clear, and the Government deserve considerable credit for pushing through such important strategic changes.

British industry and commerce throughout the country are without doubt now far fitter and leaner and more capable of competing in both good and bad times. That is indubitably true. The public, too, thank goodness, have a far healthier attitude towards the creation of wealth and the accumulation of profit. That in itself is important for the country's future success. However, there remains the rather sad socialist-inspired envy and jealousy of the salaries necessarily paid to the high-class and successful men and women who run our most successful corporations and professions.

I wish to give my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State what I hope will be constructive suggestions which I hope he will consider. I hope that my right hon. Friend realises—one would be hard pushed to know it—that not one of the brilliant economic successes in this country was created by a Minister or civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry; they were created by forceful, vigorous and sometimes visionary entrepreneurs and managers operating in highly competitive markets, in many cases on a global basis.

There is no doubt that vigorous domestic rivalry is the key to economic success. In my constituency especially, there has been an enormous amount of that in the past 10 years and the creation of wealth has proved a powerful and beneficial force in our community. However, the Government are still far too involved in interfering with the marketplace. The Department of Transport's recent activities on route licensing are a case in point, and there remains an enormous amount to be done on deregulation and on the removal of vast amounts of red tape which still clog and bind the everyday life of business men.

The Government must not pretend—I do not think that they do—that the United Kingdom economy does not still have some fundamental, deep-seated problems. It is a great sadness to me to see the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who is a good man, make such a poor, knock-about speech on matters that are so important to the interests of this country.

Many of our problems are deep seated and go back many years. The socialist-inspired anti-industry climate and culture has not yet been properly extirpated from this country. There is still little real appreciation of industry's role as the primary generator of wealth for the country as a whole. There is no doubt about that in Japan or the United States of America. Although I do not expect the Opposition to begin to understand it, it is simple.

The generation of wealth in international and domestic trading by manufacturing and service industry is fundamental to the provision of a higher standard of living for everyone. It is the most basic social service of all. Therefore, it must be a top priority because everything else that the Government do depends upon their being able to provide it and pay for it using money earned by the creators of wealth. Let us be under no illusions: our European partners benefit from a far more appreciative understanding of industry and from a much stronger consensus about economic nationalism throughout their society.

So we return to the inevitable debate on education. As a country, we have much to do in terms of education. As an early step, I congratulate the Government on the brilliant success of the technical and vocational education initiative, which, by any standards, is one of the most radical innovations in the history of British education. Many other important steps have been taken, such as the introduction of the national curriculum. However, we still have to mount a further deliberate and sustained campaign to train ourselves to be a great industrial state. Ministers and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East are right to emphasise that national education and training, coupled with research and development innovation and marketing, are key instruments to our future success. We must teach our people to acquire the mental equipment and ability and the habits of mind to embrace chance and to continue to search for new and better competing technologies.

The United Kingdom still has substantially lower levels of educational attainments than Germany, France and Japan. Forty-two per cent. of the British work force have no skill qualifications whatsoever, whereas all school leavers in Germany go into training or into further education. In Japan and the United States, the figure is more than 90 per cent.

No real efforts are made to encourage students—especially very good students—to pursue a career in industry. Fisons, when submitting evidence to the Lords Select Committee on industry, stated:

> "Good calibre students . . . particularly at the secondary level, are discouraged still from thinking of industry as a career."

In its evidence, ICI claimed:

> "The sciences and engineering . . . are not widely or well enough taught in British schools".

The source of Japan's technological strength is not its Ministry of International Trade and Industry, or intervention, but education. Universities and colleges are geared towards economic progress, and there is a profound understanding of the relationships that are required between industry and Government and between education and the educators.

As a result, Japan and Germany have a far higher proportion of engineers in their work forces. In France, engineers are the most represented group in management. In Britain, a lot of miserable accountants dominate. In this country the word "engineer" is, in Correlli Barnett's words,

> "synonymous with the chap who fixes the washing machine."

In France, the grandes ecoles, the ecole polytechnique and other schools of higher professional and executive training have long enjoyed parity of esteem with the Ecole Normale Superieure.

I shall say a few words about the relationship between business and Government. It is lamentable and unforgivable that so few civil servants have had proper attachments in the private sector, and vice versa. It is a national disgrace which would not be accepted in any other sophisticated industrial country. The Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, should put in hand at once a programme

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that will forthwith set out to achieve that. For 40 years, the civil service and the Government have prevaricated, but they must now do something about it.

Equally important, there must be a change in the Government's attitude towards industry. We must establish a fuller and more open working partnership between Government and industry. Such relationships have existed to enormous mutual benefit in France, Germany and Japan, which are light years ahead of us in that respect. The Government should be aware that to this day many senior and important business men in this country believe that industrial success is still assigned a low place in the official order of things and, even with the change of the Government's attitude towards business, there is scope for much improvement.

One of the most irritating things for British commerce is the Government's apparent obsession with small firms. I am a keen supporter of small business and will do whatever I can to encourage it and to advance its claims, because such firms are excellent for morale and need vigorous encouragement, but they will never have a major impact on Britain's world ranking as an industrial power. The Government need to do more, and to have more regard, for the interests of major corporations.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will read with great care the remarks that were made by many senior industrialists in another place the day before yesterday on the Export and Investment Guarantees Bill. Not one of their Lordships spoke in favour of it. The Government must support the efforts of our major industries to win greater market share, especially in export markets. There is substantial evidence that they have failed to do so. The major corporations insist that the Government should deal as effectively with other Governments as businesses are required to deal with other companies.

Her Majesty's Government have an enormous amount still to do for the advancement of industry and commerce in this country. As a Government, naturally we are not without blame, and I and many others look to my right hon. Friend to pursue with vigour, courage and imagination the interests of all this country's wealth creators and to advance the interests of the United Kingdom.

7.50 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): During the last election, the subject facing the voters was the British economy. I am sure that the same will be true at the next election. It is interesting to hear Conservative Members talk now about the economy, because I remember sitting in the Chamber a couple of years ago to hear those same Conservative Members telling us that we were having "an economic miracle" that would change this country into the economic super-state of Europe.

As always in debates on the economy, we must examine the figures both for this country and for our competitors in Europe. This country's gross domestic product fell by 1·3 per cent. in 1989, while Germany's GDP grew by 4·5 per cent.; France's GDP grew by 1·8 per cent. and Japan's grew by 4·7 per cent. This country's manufacturing output fell by 5 per cent. in the first quarter of 1990, and our productivity is no higher now than at the time of the last general election. About 62 per cent. of our industrial work force are unskilled, compared with 38 per cent. in Germany, 21 per cent. in Italy and 20 per cent. in France. Those are just a few of the examples of how this country is being outstripped by our European competitors.

Training has been an issue in this debate. Since the Conservative Government came to power, there has been a cut of £245 million in the resources devoted to industrial training.

Let us consider what has happened to trade since the so-called "economic miracle". Our trade deficit for 1990 was £12 billion, which is our worst ever balance of payments record. Our manufacturing deficit is now £10 billion. Conservative Members may well say nice things about manufacturing industry, but in the past 10 years the Tory Government have presided over a £10 billion reduction in the trade of our manufacturing industries. When the Labour Government left office, there was a balance of payments surplus of £2·7 billion. That is never mentioned in the House when the Labour party is criticised, but I put that fact on the record now.

In 1989, under this Conservative Government, investment was down by 8·7 per cent.—again, in the period of the so-called "economic miracle". Manufacturing investment fell by 20 per cent. in 1990 yet the Government have had the benefit of £98 billion-worth of North sea oil revenues since 1979. That is the money that the Government have had in their hands for the past 10 years and which they have squandered as the party that reduced taxes and increased unemployment.

In the past 13 consecutive months, unemployment has risen by 568,000. That is an indictment of a Government who are in their death throes. There have, however, been 30 changes to the unemployment figures since the Government came to power as they have tried to fiddle the figures. There is no doubt that we are heading for an unemployment total of 3 million by 1991 or 1992, when I hope that this Conservative Government's period in office will end. Furthermore, in the second half of last year, 27,000 houses were repossessed by the building societies. That means that 27,000 people—both young and old—have lost their homes during the so-called "economic miracle".

I turn now to the figures for Government assistance to industry in the north to show the House what the Government have done for the north. The figures show why there are not many Tory Members in the north—*[Interruption.]* Well, there may be one or two, or three at the most, but the mind boggles. In 1979, under the Labour Administration, the north received £349 million-worth of Government assistance to industry. By 1989-90 that figure had decreased to £190 million—another indictment of the Government and their so-called "economic miracle". In 1979, the Labour Government gave £1,344 million in assistance to industry, but by 1989 the Conservative Government were giving only £505 million.

Business failures in the north-east soared by 109 per cent. between 1989 and 1990. In Britain as a whole, they rose by 77 per cent. Unemployment in the north has increased by 51 per cent. and is 10 per cent. higher than in any other region in Britain. In my constituency of Blyth Valley, the number of unemployed people has increased by 640—an increase of 25 per cent. in the past few months, 41 per cent. of whom have been out of work for six months or more; 48 per cent. of whom are aged under 30 and 76 per cent. of whom are male.

The recession in the north-east has begun to bite, especially in my constituency where two companies, which had shown great promise, have gone into receivership. The Burberry clothing factory has closed, with the loss of 340 jobs. Last week, another 240 or 250 job losses were announced at the Blyth power station. The town's larger companies have been laying off at least 5 per cent. of the men and women employed in their factories. Nothing like that has been seen in Blyth Valley since the closure of Bates colliery after the miners' strike, when we lost more than 1,000 jobs.

Those figures are an indictment of the Government. As I have said, the No. 1 issue at the next election will be the economy—it will be the number one issue for the Labour party—and because of it we shall see the end of this Conservative Government once and for all.

7.59 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): We have heard much from Opposition Members about the Government's record. However, they did not mention that there are more jobs in Britain now than there were in 1979. They did not say that, during the 1980s, productivity in British manufacturing industry rose faster than in any other major industrial economy in the world. They did not say that manufacturing output is significantly higher than it was in 1979. Indeed, during the 1980s Britain's manufacturing output rose faster than that of any other major European economy.

I remind Opposition Members, because they attach a great deal of importance to manufacturing industry, that when the Labour party was last in power manufacturing output fell. So much for the supposed devastation of Britain's manufacturing industry under this Government.

Let us examine Labour's policies. We have heard a great deal about the minimum wage. Even the Fabian Society, an in-house Labour group, says that 880,000 jobs would be lost if a minimum wage was imposed. What do Opposition Members' hon. Friends say? The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), a Labour Member and, as we all know, a greatly respected one, has said that the employment consequences of a minimum wage would be nothing short of disastrous.

What about the Opposition's friends in the trade unions? Gavin Laird, a respected trade unionist in the Amalgamated Engineering Union recently said that a minimum wage was nonsense in the private sector.

"It has never worked in the past. There is no logic for it. It doesn't work in any other country and it certainly will not work in Great Britain."

I know what Opposition Members are thinking. They are thinking, "What about Germany?" I have some bad news for them. Germay does not have a statutory minimum wage. However, there is a country in Europe which has a statutory minimum wage. It is France. And France has some of the highest unemployment in the European Community. It is higher than ours.

A recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report pinpointed the statutory minimum wage in France as one of the major causes of high unemployment there. Only yesterday the French equivalent of the Confederation of British Industry, the Patronat, said that the statutory minimum wage should be abandoned in France precisely because it led to high unemployment. Few things show the fundamental dishonesty at the centre of Labour policies more than their policy of a statutory minimum wage. Labour Members pretend to the public that some sort of free ride is available, but unless pay rises match productivity, those pay rises will equal unemployment.

But there are even more dangerous policies on industry on Labour's menu. First, it says that it would set up a British investment bank. How would it be funded? Would it be funded through pensions? In one of its policy documents, the Labour party says that pension funds will

"be encouraged to take the status of their regional economy into account."

No Opposition spokesman has made it clear exactly what the role of the pension funds will be. What does that statement mean? Or would a Labour Government fund the National investment bank through taxation? If so, will it be a priority for funding?

The Labour party also proposes to establish British Technology Enterprise which apparently will buy equity in high-tech ventures. How will that be funded? Will it be funded by taxation? Labour also proposes tax credits for companies that increase their research and development. Apparently the cost of that would be almost £200 million. What priority will be accorded to that? Will it be accorded "top priority" or "absolute priority"? Have the Labour Front-Bench spokemen consulted the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)? She has said clearly on the record many times that the only priorities of a future Labour Government would be pensions and child benefit.

The Labour party is trying to be all things to all men. It pretends to the City that it is now a responsible party which will not indulge in an orgy of public spending. But to its friends in the public sector trade unions and high-spending areas, it promises to shower them with a cascade of spending.

Opposition Members should anyway consider whether research and development is really our problem in Britain. I know that it is fashionable to say that all we need to do is to increase our research and development, but the history of Britain is more that we have lost the ability to exploit the many inventions that we have made, rather than that we do not make inventions. We also have a history of putting huge state subsidies into uncommercial high-tech projects such as Concorde and Blue Streak. Certainly the precedents of Government funding of research and development in Britain are not happy.

Of course we must try to improve the way in which we exploit technology in Britain. That does not necessarily involve simply doing research and development. It can just as easily involve buying in patents and licences from other countries. After all, for many years the Japanese did well by buying in patents and technology from other countries and improving on them. If we want to get to grips with the problem of exploiting technology, above all we must, improve our education, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) said in his superb speech. That is far more important than Government-directed research and development subsidies.

Opposition Members pay lip service to the need to improve our education, but the record in areas where the Labour party runs the local education authority is poor. LEAs in all those areas have in common that they spend great sums of money—far more than they did in 1979 on a per pupil basis—but have standards that are far below the national average and certainly far below the standard achieved by many of our competitors. Every time that we have attempted to improve education in Britain—by

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

introducing the national curriculum and testing and through the devolution of power and authority to the schools—we have been opposed tooth and nail by the Opposition.

Underlying many of the Opposition's policies is a belief that Government intervention in the economy is the saviour of manufacturing industry. But their policies on interventionism are based to a large extent on a misreading of Japan. It is easy for politicians and business men to use the Ministry of International Trade and Industry—MITI—as an excuse for Japan's success, rather than admit that the company has not produced competitive products or taken the long-term marketing decisions necessary to beat the Japanese.

The success of many of Japan's most successful industries such as manufacturing tractors, personal computers, photocopiers, motor-bikes and cars has had nothing to do with MITI. Indeed, many have refused MITI's meddling, including the car industry which in the 1950s refused MITI attempts to consolidate the industry and push it into developing a people's car along Volkswagen beetle lines. Even in industries such as computers and semiconductors, which have received help from MITI, that help has been a tiny proportion of the investment that the companies have made. Most sensible surveys of those industries show that MITI had little to do with the success of those industries.

Certainly, OECD figures show that Japanese state subsidies for research and development are way below those that prevail in both Europe and the United States. Subsidies for research and development are anyway too often snapped up by large companies for work which they would do anyway.

The real reasons for Japanese success have nothing to do with MITI and offer little comfort to Labour. Japan has had low public spending, high levels of saving, low taxation, pro-business attitudes and, above all, an excellent, rigorous, vocationally oriented education system. I sometimes wonder why Opposition Members do not look to countries such as India and Brazil, where highly interventionist industrial policies have been abject failures.

The problem with intervention is that too often it promotes inappropriate development, such as computers in Brazil, rockets in India and steel in Nigeria. Too often decisions made by politicians are based on political rather than commercial considerations. Too often the money goes to those with the most lobbying power, and resources are diverted from industries that could use the funds more efficiently.

We have had it all before, not just under Labour. The Macmillan Government forced a private steel company not only to invest in one big integrated plant in Wales, but to split the plant between a site in Wales and an unsuitable site in Scotland. The last time that we had a Labour industrial strategy, it gave us a British Airways which was rated below Aeroflot by its customers, a British Leyland which was an international joke and a British Steel that was the biggest loss maker in the world. How can we expect the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who has never manufactured anything except dodgy policies, to do any better?

I am sometimes amazed at the arrogance of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. None of them has even worked in industry, yet they believe that they can make better decisions than business men themselves. Opposition Members have the cheek to sneer at Hanson, yet it is a successful United Kingdom business which offers good employment to many people, including my constituents in a plant which certainly would not exist if it were not for the huge investment put in by Hanson.

All the Opposition's policies would harm industry. Nothing they would do would help. They would clobber savers with an investment-income surcharge, they would push up taxes and their minimum wage policy would costs hundreds of thousands of jobs. They would meddle with industry and encourage anti-business attitudes by equating enterprise with greed, as they habitually do. The Opposition would renationalise various industries when countries all over the world have been falling over themselves to denationalise. Above all, the Opposition would ensure that our education system did not improve.

The Labour party's policies demonstrate that no amount of flashy, sharp suits or tacky, red plastic roses can hide how little that party has changed its policies from those that proved so disastrous in the 1970s.

8.9 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I will not follow the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) in his grovelling sycophancy towards Japan. Obviously he is too thin to be a sumo wrestler and not quite smart enough to be a sophisticated apologist for the system.

It is interesting that we have heard two arguments only from the Conservative Benches. The first is that things got better when the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) was Chancellor. The second is that the country is too poor to afford a minimum wage. That has been the essence of the Conservative argument.

Labour Members have brought home the depth and extent of the depression, which is horrendous. This recession is damaging the industrial base on which everything in this country rests—the standard of living of an advanced society, jobs and growth. Everything that our economy needs rests on that industrial base, but it is being irreparably damaged by what is happening now. That damage will make it much more difficult for the country to expand and grow in the future. Every job lost and every factory closed means that imports will be sucked in by any expansion in the future. That expansion will be strangled because of a balance of payments constraint. That balance of payments is already horrendous.

Deflation is a ruinous policy. I am afraid that the present recession is not an aberration. It is a logical consequence of Government policy and it will be extremely difficult to break out of it.

The Lawson revival was an aberration, not today's recession. That recovery was caused by a number of one-off factors. It was caused by an asset-price inflation, which the Government dare not let loose again. The oil was there to pay for the imports, but supplies are now dwindling. That revival was also caused by a 30 per cent. devaluation in real terms against the deutschmark. This from the Government who claim never to devalue. They won two elections following devaluation. In 1986, there was a 30 per cent. devaluation against the deutschmark. We cannot repeat that now. That revival was also aided by

the financial liberalisation that boosted the City. Those were the one-off factors that produced the recovery. Those factors cannot be repeated and now we are locked into deflation.

The tragedy is that what turns the key and nails the lid on deflation is membership of the exchange rate mechanism. We have bound ourselves to tie our exchange rate to that of west Germany. It will be kept within a 6 per cent. band. An essential of the system is to get our inflation down to Germany's abnormal low rate of inflation. However, we have entered the ERM at an overvalued rate, which is more than 20 per cent. higher in real terms than the exchange rate at the end of 1986. We warned about the danger of entering at an overvalued rate.

If every factory held wage increases or gave zero wage increases and if it cut the wage paid to its work force it could still not return to the competitive level vis-a-vis West Germany that existed at the end of 1986. Even then we were not particularly competitive. The Government have followed a ruinous policy that installs permanent deflation.

Where is the locomotive of growth? What will pull us out of the recession? The Minister made a pathetic speech. In answer to my intervention he said that once one got inflation down, interest rates could come down. However, the ERM precludes that because those interest rates support the exchange rate. If that is the central object of policy we are doomed to high interest rates. It means that we cannot reduce those rates by more than half a per cent. —and only occasionally. They are bound to remain high because the pound is overvalued and to keep it in its band in the ERM we must keep interest rates high.

Effectively, the country is no longer run by the Government. They cannot take decisions on interest rates. The country is now run by Robin Leigh-Pemberton—to name but three. The Governor of the Bank of England will decide when interest rate cuts can be made, but they cannot be substantial, and that is the trap. The country and industry are crying out for interest rate cuts, but the Government cannot make them. In that policy lies permanent deflation.

We shall be faced with a sustained diet of what France had to endure during the 1980s. Let us consider the damning OECD report on French competitiveness. That country has come through damaging inflation, but that has not made it any more competitive than Britain. We are now entering the same deflationary period, which will be hard, long and permanent. That way lies disaster for manufacturing. A Government who fight inflation with such techniques ruin manufacturing.

It is easy to bring down inflation, any fool can do it. All one has to do is to deflate the economy so massively that inflationary pressures end. The Government are pursuing that policy, but by doing so they are destroying our manufacturing base, our front line in international competition.

Manufacturing has not caused inflation. Manufacturing wages went up 14 per cent. only, in real terms, during the 1980s, but the wages in non-manufacturing went up by 42 per cent. The non-manufacturing sector has caused the inflationary pressures, but manufacturing has suffered the consequences of high interest rates and an overvalued exchange rate. The manufacturing industry has suffered the closures, but it is supposed to be our front line in the international market. It is supposed to face the trade sectors of other countries.

We are fighting inflation by taking resources out of production and keeping them out permanently. If they are reintroduced inflation must resume because they are the cause of it. All the Government can do is under-run the economy and let unemployment rise. In that policy lies a future of remorselessly rising unemployment. It will go beyond 3 million because there is nothing to stop it. In that policy lies a future of more closures. It is forecast that between 40,000 and 50,000 firms will close this year alone. We are already losing 4,000 manufacturing jobs a week.

We shall have an increasing Government deficit. Government finances have already turned from a surplus of £14 billion to a deficit of about £8·5 billion. That is equivalent to a turnaround of £23 billion. The Government will have to increase taxes next year because corporation tax receipts will go down because profits will be in such a mess because firms are going bust. Expenditure on social security and unemployment will increase because unemployment is rising so rapidly. We shall be faced with a deficit that will rise continuously. There is no way out, because the Government are under-running the economy—that is their only policy.

Such deflationary economics are disastrous. The Government claim that industries and firms are closing because they are not price competitive. They argue that they could improve their price competitiveness by cutting labour costs. However, there is another way, which is to cut the exchange rate which is forcing that deflation upon us.

To make ourselves competitive in overseas trade we should reduce the exchange rate. It is too high and it must come down. The dollar came down to cope with the United States deficit—after 1985 the dollar fell by 50 per cent. That reduction in the exchange rate has been an enormous benefit to the United States balance of trade and its manufacturing sector. The pound must do the same. There is nothing else for it. That is what markets are about. To try to dam up the pound forces deflation on the country.

We should not cut demand, as the Government have done, but expand it and see that it is channelled by the price mechanism to production in this country. We should make it competitive for British industry to produce, to export and to make profits. We should increase the price of imports through the price mechanism to give British industry the advantage that it now lacks. We should give British industry that advantage and stimulate it. If that happened interest rates would come down. Unit costs would also come down because production would increase. The whole economy would pick up as a result and the costs of unemployment would fall. All the burdens facing British industry would fall and we would return to the path of growth. That is the only way out.

The Government will be driven to it sooner or later. It should be sooner because if they allow what is happening to go on, they will be doing irreparable and irreversible damage to the manufacturing base. There is no way that their present policies can improve competitiveness, revive industry and stimulate manufacturing on which we depend. The Government are following a phoenix policy. Phoenixes arise from ashes. The more ashes that are

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

produced, the more phoenixes we shall get, and that is all that the Government can expect to come out of their present policies.

It is essential to expand the economy, to allow industry to generate a profit and to expand as a result of investing that profit. That is the only way forward. The Government are sealing their own fate, but unfortunately they are sealing the fate of the country in a trap of orthodoxy.

8.20 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Having taken part in a number of like debates since coming to this place, I have concluded that they are becoming progressively drearier. That is happening because Opposition Members use these occasions simply to have a go at British industry and run down British companies and the economy. They also try to give the impression that British companies have the one aim of using downturns in the economy to winkle money out of the Government, which of course is not the case.

I admit that we are in a downturn. None of my hon. Friends has denied that. I, too, have seen CBI surveys. Indeed, I have participated in conducting a few of them in my time. I know, if Opposition Members do not, that British managers are adept at using such surveys to put pressure on the Government of the day, whatever their complexion, and that is happening now.

Whatever else those surveys show, beneath them lies the fact that British manufacturing and other companies are now immeasurably more resilient than at any time in the past 20 years. So I start from the premise that British businesses are among the best in Europe, and I am a bit tired of sitting here listening to a litany of defeatism from Opposition Members.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): This morning I received a letter from a north-west inward investment agency saying that, in 1990-91, it achieved the greatest number of inward investment jobs in the whole of its existence. That proves that overseas investors have more confidence in the future of our economy than have Opposition Members.

Mr. Cran: There is no doubt about that; my hon. Friend makes an eloquent point.

I was saying that British business was among the best in Europe. Those with knowledge of the subject know that we have some of the best companies on the globe. To listen to Opposition Members, one would think that we had none. Of the top 500 companies in the European Community, 138 are British and only 92 are German. One would have thought, from the remarks of Labour Members, that the Germans would be ahead of us in that regard.

The wording of the Opposition motion is an utter disgrace. One would think that we were experiencing the collapse of manufacturing industry in Britain. I am a northern Member and am interested in manufacturing, although I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) that the service sector is also important. I have an interest in manufacturing, and apart from this it is clear that all sectors of the economy are interested in having a strong manufacturing base. There is no difference between the two sides of the House on that, yet it is extraordinary that Opposition Members have not conceded what has happened over the years. For example, manufacturing output in the 1970s went down in absolute terms. Under Conservative rule, from 1982 to 1989, it increased in absolute terms. We have heard not a word of that from the Opposition. I was particularly disappointed that my near neighbour, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), should have given an impression contrary to the facts.

I have examined a number of company results in the United Kingdom to get to the true position. Consider, for example, the company to which the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) referred, British Aerospace, Britain's biggest manufacturing company. In his annual statement, dated 25 February 1991, the chairman of that company said:

"We are pleased to announce record results in this tenth anniversary year of British Aerospace as a public company."

That meant pre-tax profits of £376 million, which was a record. If we are to believe the silly motion tabled by Opposition Members, there should have been a turndown in profits. Sales for that year were also a record, at £10·5 billion. Orders for this year stand at a record £11·8 billion —I attempted to explain that to the right hon. Member for Salford, East. In addition, British Aerospace has had a number of orders recently for aircraft, making that figure even greater. Again, that makes nonsense of the Opposition's silly motion.

It may be said that I have been lucky in choosing a company that suits my argument. I will therefore take another, Lucas Industries. Anybody with experience of British business and manufacturing knows that Lucas was an ailing giant when the lot on the Opposition Benches left office in 1979, and many people in the midlands thought that it would close down. The 1990 annual report and accounts for Lucas Industries show that group sales are at the highest level ever and that the same applies to the group operating profits, earnings per share and dividends per share. Perhaps more important, sales per employee are at the highest level ever.

Moreover, I did not know the figures, I would expect that there had been a downturn at Lucas in research and development expenditure. Instead, last year the company spent £99 million on research and development and with the addition of capital expenditure of £136 million. The combined figure is £325 million, 25 per cent. higher than in the previous year.

Those are two significant manufacturing companies at the sharp end of competition worldwide, and they are doing a great deal better than Opposition Members suggest.

While the business sector in Britain has occasionally faced difficulties, under Conservative rule it has managed to achieve levels of profitability never dreamt of when Labour Members had an opportunity to produce results. Business is also concerned about inflation, and it is therefore not accidental that the CBI has put at the top of its "Business Agenda for the 1990's" the question of the control of inflation. Yet the motion does not contain the word "inflation." That is because Labour Members do not understand that inflation kills the prospects of companies, because it erodes their international competitiveness.

We have not done as well as we might in controlling inflation. While I am the first to admit that, the facts show that, whereas our lowest rate of inflation was 2·9 per cent., the lowest inflation rate achieved by the last Labour Government was 7·4 per cent. Inflation is important

because, if we could get it down to the German level, business would pay far less in interest—in fact, by about £8 billion a year. British business would also pay far less in corporation tax because with high inflation inflated profits are made.

I am bullish about British business and the industrial sector, especially manufacturing. I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler): if the Opposition are correct in saying that the Government do not look after the interests of business, why does this country attract more foreign investment than any country in the European Community? There are more Japanese and American companies in this country than in any other simply because we look after industry.

When the Labour party had an opportunity to do so, it destroyed British business and undermined morale. That is no longer the case, and I expect much from British business in the next few years.

8.32 pm

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): I was elected to this House in November, just two days after the Prime Minister came to power. Throughout that election campaign people told me, "One thing is sure, Mrs. Adams. Things can't get much worse." At that time I probably agreed with them. How wrong we all were. Six or seven months later, a further 500,000 people are unemployed —people who thought that they had a future.

I listened to the Secretary of State telling us that the standard of living has increased. I wish that he would tell that to the 11 million people who are on the bread-line. The report by the National Children's Home last week said that many children in this country were going hungry. They were malnourished not because their parents were ignorant but because they did not have enough to eat. Their parents knew the right type of food that was required but they simply could not afford to buy it. That is the increase in the standard of living to which the Secretary of State referred.

Scotland has suffered particularly badly in this recession. It is the second round for Scotland, as it is for the rest of the country. When the Government came to power in 1979, my constituency was somewhat different. The town of Paisley was a single constituency. Recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) asked the Scottish Office what was the net increase in manufacturing jobs in Paisley since 1979. The reply was that the net loss of manufacturing jobs was 14,500—in a town of 85,000 people. That probably means that not a single family in that town has not been hit by the loss of a manufacturing job. Those jobs had existed for over a century. They were jobs in cotton—most hon. Members probably had their buttons sewn on with cotton manufactured in Paisley by Coats and Clarkes. We now have two skeleton buildings standing in the middle of our town.

Coats and Clarkes was not the only company to go to the wall. At the end of last year, just as I came to the House, one of those centres of engineering excellence—Howden and Renfrew—disappeared, having been in existence for 120 years. Howden's work force were highly skilled in engineering. It was involved in research and development of renewable energy and was a world leader in that market. It was also involved in the manufacture of tunnelling equipment. I sat on the Committee that examined the Bill to introduce a link from Heathrow airport to central London. Only one company in Britain could manufacture the necessary tunnelling equipment to build that link—Howden and Renfrew. When the Bill's proceedings finished, Howden and Renfrew sold off all its plant and machinery to a company abroad, which will make the same tunnelling equipment for Heathrow. Howden's no longer exists.

Conservative Members asked about skilled engineering. If they would care to come to my constituency tomorrow, I shall show them 400 highly skilled engineers who no longer have a job because Howden's no longer exists. They lost their jobs because of the Government's short-term policies and lack of foresight, and the fact that they are locked into a dogma of the past that would not permit them to enter into a partnership with that industry to help it over a hurdle. The company was asking not for nationalisation but for a partnership to help it when it was experiencing a short-term blip. It had millions of pounds, worth of orders on its books and simply needed a little assistance for a short time. The Government could not and would not give that assistance then, and nor would it now. If we pass a man with a broken leg in the street, do we refuse to send for an ambulance because that is intervention? That is the kind of intervention that was needed at Howden's to help it to pass that stage.

The same happened in construction. Construction of private housing in Scotland has increased by 20 per cent. Unfortunately, construction in public sector housing has decreased by 78 per cent. The same people who have been put on the dole by high interest rates—a policy of this Government—are losing their houses. Because of those high interest rates, they cannot pay their mortgages. They then find that there are no public sector houses for them to move into.

The Government have continued with those policies and appear to have no intention of changing that path. They ask us continually about a standard minimum wage. Are they seriously telling us that they expect people to work for a pittance for ever? They seem to think that it is all right for people, such as those who work in hamburger restaurants or as security guards, to work for £1 an hour. The Government say that a standard minimum wage would create unemployment but 2·5 million people are already on the dole.

When will the Government's policies, about which we so often hear, put people back to work? That has not happened so far, especially in my constituency. We are losing jobs at a record rate, to the extent that I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to visit my constituency. There is now almost a haemorrhage. In one area, 40 per cent. of males are unemployed and there is no sign of improvement. By the day, we are losing solid, long-term jobs that have existed for centuries and there is nothing to replace them. There has been a net loss of 14,500 jobs. When will the Government finally realise that they are in the death throes and that there is no future for them? When will they move over and let someone else do the job?

8.39 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The House should reject the Opposition's motion, which is ill conceived and shows no understanding of the needs of industry, and which fails to mention profits. It is an airy-fairy motion from academics, not from business practitioners. The Opposition have

[Mr. David Shaw]

failed to acknowledge Government successes. The car industry, for example, has been turned round from the devastation that it suffered under Labour. The deficit in that industry was growing when Labour left office, but now it is moving towards a surplus in the trade in motor cars and accessories.

The international competitiveness of our industry is growing as never before. We have been immensely successful in aerospace and pharmaceuticals. The Opposition constantly fail to acknowledge the impact of inflation on industry. Perhaps they do so because it hit 27 per cent. under Labour—a subject on which the Opposition engage in a conspiracy of silence. I invite Opposition academics to spend more time studying industry. I recommend that they look at the review by the National Westminster bank of February 1991, which carries an article entitled "How Inflation Undermines Industrial Success". It might as well have been entitled "How Labour's Policies Would Undermine Industrial Success". Labour needs a training seminar on how inflation costs industry so dearly.

Inflation causes higher costs for plant and machinery, and leads to higher working capital costs for financing industrial stocks and debtors. It reduces cash flows and damages industry, so why did the Opposition not mention it in their motion? Why do they ignore the effects of inflation on industry? Why do only the Government recognise how damaging inflation can be to industry? Perhaps it is because Labour's policy of higher public expenditure and a minimum wage would add to inflation. Labour has nothing but inflationary policies that would damage British industry.

The Opposition have missed an opportunity. Their motion could have complained about higher taxes on British business, but that would have drawn attention to the Labour Government's higher tax rates. Some may think it strange that I am drawing attention to taxes on business, but even under this Government, while tax rates have been reduced, our tax allowances are no longer as competitive as they used to be. Tax relief for depreciation must be reduced further.

The Federal Reserve bank of New York published a research paper, No. 8193, which I commend to the House and to Ministers. It has an international study on the competitiveness of the United Kingdom tax allowances and other matters compared with the United States, Japan and Germany. It shows that this country is good on inflation because it is low and that internationally we have low real interest rates. However, it also shows that, on capital allowances, we have some way to go. I hope that the Minister and other Ministers in the Treasury will look at table 1 of that study. It shows that we need to reduce taxation further.

There is no comfort for businesses in the Labour party's policies. Not only would taxation be higher if Labour were in office, but a Labour Government would subsidise industry by attempting to pick winners. I wonder why the Labour party thinks that it can pick winners. Gamblers at the gambling table cannot do it, so what is so special about Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen? They have failed before and they would fail again if they were in office.

The Labour party's ideas on training would also fail. They want to train people for yesterday's jobs, but only business men know what the jobs of the future will be. No Labour politician will have any idea about that. The Government are introducing training and enterprise councils, which will be run by business men who are aware of what the jobs of the future will be. TECs will work and train people for the future.

The Labour party has crazy ideas on research and development. Its policy harks back to Harold Wilson's white heat of technology—the biggest failure the country ever had. Harold Wilson's policies for industry, for selective employment tax and for higher national insurance were failures. The Labour party should be looking forward to the year 2000, rather than back at the 1960s, for its industrial policies.

I was an accountant when investment grants were given for research and development projects. Companies would arrange their accounts so that overheads were included in such projects. Management time and overtime were added to inflate the investment grant.

Mr. Whitney: The Opposition do not understand.

Mr. Shaw: No, they do not understand, because they do not have any experience to give them the understanding. Tax credits given in the way proposed by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) would cause problems. I wish that he were here to listen to the reality. He proposed tax credits, but he knows that they are wrong and will not work. Furthermore, he knows that the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer would not allow him the money anyway.

Labour still has a policy of nationalisation. For example, it wants to renationalise British Telecom, the one company that has increased its efficiency massively, along with improving its services to industry. It is becoming more efficient each year under the Conservative Government and the policy of privatisation. Privatisation has improved efficiency.

I commend the Government's policies to the House. They are helping industry. We shall overcome any problems that have resulted from the recession. Our industry will come out of the recession strongr and more solid than every before. It will be a world-beating industry, which will not suffer from the negative attitude of the Labour party. The Labour party will never have the chance to run British industry because it will be run by business men, helped and assisted by a Conservative Government.

8.46 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) should come to my constituency and explain to the 300 workers at Bridon Fibres, the hundreds of workers at De La Rue on the Team Valley trading estate and the hundreds in the royal ordnance factory in Birtley who have just lost their jobs, that their sacrifice on the altar of Tory economic policy is worth paying.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) is not in his place. He quoted, ad nauseam, the Confederation of British Industry, but one has to remember that he was once the chairman of the northern region of the CBI. We all know that the CBI is nothing but an apologist for the Tory Government. Increasingly, we

have to look to the chambers of commerce and the industry associations to get the true picture of the state of British industry under a Tory Government.

The northern region was once one of the cornerstones of manufacturing industry, but under this Government it has become a poor relation to Taiwan and South Korea as our manufacturing industries have been run down and closed while theirs have grown and thrived. The industries that have suffered are not, as too often we are told by the estate agents and second-hand care salesmen on the Government Benches, outdated smokestack industries that have outlived their time. All too often they have been industries at the forefront of technology—industries such as Marconi and Plessey. Too often they have been closed not because their products have become extinct but because of the economic policies of remote headquarters and the British Government. This has sometimes been caused by the Government's inaction and sometimes by the direct application of blinkered dogma.

An example of the former was the closure of the Caterpillar tractor factory in Birtley some years ago, when 1,500 workers were thrown out of work as a result of a decision taken in the United States, and one taken purely for the economic convenience of the parent company. That it was not the result of a lack of demand for the earth-moving vehicles that the plant produced is shown by the fact that the plant was bought by the Japanese company Komatsu, which immediately began to produce the same product and thankfully mopped up some of the unemployment caused by the closure. That achievement was down to the Labour-controlled metropolitan county council of Tyne and Wear and the Labour-controlled metropolitan borough of Gateshead. The Government's non-interventionist, hands-off approach did nothing to prevent the closure or to bring about the rescue.

Another example of the Government's contribution to the fate of manufacturing industry in the north is the disgraceful set of circumstances surrounding the close of North-East Shipbuilders on the River Wear. Hundreds of skilled workers were thrown out of work, many having given their lifetimes to the industry. An acknowledged highly technologically advanced and modern facility was closed as a direct result of and for no other reason than the Government's determination to pursue their dogmatic privatisation policies. That happened to such a degree that the wheeling and dealing that went on behind the scenes at the Department of Trade and Industry and among private interests resulted in the yard being forced to close even though other private interests were willing and able to take over the yard and to maintain its shipbuilding tradition on an unsubsidised basis.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) observed earlier, the workers were told that they could do anything in the yard except build ships. Anyone who saw the recent "Panorama" programme called "Scuttling British Shipbuilding" will acknowledge that the performance of the Department in this example was as near to corruption as makes no difference. The conspiracy acted out by Ministers in collusion with the deputy chairman of British Shipbuilders, behind the back of his chairman, was a disgraceful episode in our industrial history.

We heard from the right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) that living standards have improved over the past 12 years. That is not true of everyone. The gap between rich and poor has undoubtedly grown. Even though it can be argued that, on average, people are better off, that has been the case under every Government since the second world war, so there is no economic miracle in that.

The problem, and the point of the debate, is that the erosion of our manufacturing base means that living standards today are built on shifting sands. Stability and security of employment are less reliable. The reason is that, over the past 12 years, the Government have shown scant regard for manufacturing industry. Ministers have often shown contempt for the manufacturing sector as they have pursued and promoted the interests of the City and of financial and other service industries.

What are the answers? We must organise our fiscal and taxation policies so that they encourage investment in manufacturing rather than in property development and the like. We must produce educational and training policies which are suited to the 21st century and which recognise the importance of vocational as well as academic subjects and qualifications.

It would also help if the Government supported British industry in their own procurement policies. The prevarication over the order for the Challenger 2 tank is a typical example of how the Government play fast and loose with the well-being of British manufacturing and of how they are willing to risk the loss of British tank-making and, far more importantly, the loss of the skills and experience of thousands of qualified engineers.

The motion refers to policies for the regions. That is a vital area in which our industries and communities must develop. Britain has become one of the most centralised and bureaucratic countries in the western world. The Government have no policy for the regions ; instead, they have merely extended the tentacles of Ministers into the regions. We in the northern region of England have long recognised that the way out of our problems—short of a change of Government, which is what the country really needs—is to take matters into our own hands.

The local authorities in the region got together and formed the Northern Region Councils Association. That organisation came together with the regional Trades Union Congress and the regional Confederation of British Industry to form a tripartite body which gave birth to the Northern Development Company. That is the embryo of a fully fledged regional development agency, which the next Labour Government will create. That will lead to the creation of a regional assembly for the region which, far from adding to bureaucracy, will draw together, thin out and co-ordinate the myriad ad hoc bodies and quangos set up by the Government over the past 12 years. It will be an assembly under the control and direction of the people who live in and represent the region. It will be formed of people who are elected by the regional electorate and who are not appointed by Ministers.

That system will allow the British people to set their own agenda and to pursue their own priorities. Just as local authorities in the north have been responsible for investment by Nissan, Komatsu and others, for modern transport systems and for quality services, so the regional assembly will be able to begin to build in accordance with the aspirations of its own people the kind of economy and infrastructure that they need. That system works well in other European countries. Incidentally, it gives them greater and more direct access to European funds than our

[Mr. David Clelland]

own communities have. It is a more efficient and more democratic system, and it is the way forward in a modern democracy.

8.54 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland), like his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), displays—yet again—the same negative attitude to the achievements of British industry which we have come to expect not only from the Labour party but, sadly, from the Liberal Democrats, if we are to judge by the contribution of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) who seemed to misunderstand or deliberately ignore what has been achieved since 1979.

We must question whether those parties have the slightest interest in the success of British business, because one of the main points about business is to create a climate of confidence. One understands the motivation of the political climate and of the atmosphere that we generate in the House, but one must realise that confidence and a positive attitude are crucial to the success of business. We have had no glimmer of that from the Opposition, including the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge. As always, the quintessential example was the contribution by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East.

Of course there are problems; everyone understands that. We understand that at present, British business is encountering difficulties, but it is important to see the matter in the perspective of the achievements since 1979. Those achievements include an eight-year cycle of growth which is quite outstanding over a decade. No one could get that message from what the Opposition have said. In the decade of the 1980s, output in Britain grew faster than the output of France, of Germany and of Italy. Allowing for closures and mergers, the net increase in the number of businesses has been 375,000 since 1980. The standard of living of our people has increased by about one third. Everyone except the Opposition understands that.

The recession is serious and it is not confined to this country. It affects Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. We all have problems, including the problem of inflation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained—I am not sure that he was understood by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—the mistakes that were made in 1988. However, the mistakes made by this Government were as nothing compared with the mistakes made by the Labour party in 1988 about the need to maintain a sensible level of interest rates.

The interest rate problem is serious, although, as someone with experience of business, I believe that it is possible to exaggerate it. What is important for business is not only whether the interest rate is 1 per cent. up or 0·5 per cent. down, but whether there is general confidence in the conduct of the economy by the Government of the day. No sensible business could possibly have any confidence in either the Labour party or—after the contribution tonight of one of its members—the Liberal Democrat party. Certainly, interest rates are important and I endorse what my hon. Friends have said about the importance of the banks' contribution.

A disturbing letter was sent to one of my constituents by one of the leading clearing banks to advise him of a forthcoming change in the bank's policy involving the recovery of the interest and service costs on his account. It stated that it did not involve a change in my constituent's business, but that the bank was making a change which

"hopefully will enable you"—

my constituent—

"to even up some of the peaks when carrying out your cash flow planning."

The letter said that my constituent would in future be charged interest at the bank's current preferential business overdraft rate of 1·4 per cent. a month, equivalent to an effective annual rate of 18·1 per cent. My constituent had previously been paying 2·5 per cent. over base rate—14 per cent. As interest rates have come down 3 per cent. in recent months, the bank is doing a so-called generous deal with him. In fact, it was ordering him to pay 18·1 per cent., which is completely unacceptable.

I hope that the banks will listen to the message strongly put to them by the Government. I hope that they will understand the message; the Leader of the Opposition does not. He gave an extraordinary performance the other day, when he said:

"Small businesses which used to have arrangements to pay 3 per cent. above basic rate on their overdraft facilities are now paying as much as 17 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 403.]

The Leader of the Opposition either cannot use English properly—the way that he talked about a single European currency and the 228 words he used to say nothing show that that is a possible explanation—or he may not be good at arithmetic. He appears not to understand the difference between 3 per cent. over base rate and 17 per cent. over base rate. Whatever the explanation, it is worrying to think that the right hon. Gentleman would presume to move into No. 10, and lead the economy and business of this country. He is the leader of a party which has the effrontery to table today's motion. That demonstrates clearly the Opposition's total failure to comprehend what makes markets work.

The same is true of all the Opposition contributions today and is always true of their spokesmen. The shadow Chancellor visits businesses, utters platitudes and comes away saying that the businesses have understood him. If he were present now I would say to him that a number of business men have come to me and said, in the old American cliché, that they have heard what the shadow Chancellor says but, deep down, he is shallow and has nothing to say. That is absolutely true of the policies of the Labour party, which suggests that we do not know how to help businesses, but that it would.

The Labour party has offered many pledges, in addition to which we now have the Beckett formula. None of us knows how to work out the conundrum to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred—we cannot have additional spending without growth, but we cannot have additional growth without spending. How would the Labour party square that circle? We then have to compare the various pledges made which, it has been estimated, could cost possibly £20 billion or possibly £50 billion a year.

We all know what the impact on business would be of the Labour party's continuing, extraordinary, sad relationship with the trade unions. Many important industries have been increasingly captured by left wingers

within the trade union movement. If the Labour party were to come to power, we should be back in the old period of militancy and restrictive practices.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said, with great pride, that he would introduce a national minimum wage, as advocated by Winston Churchill in 1908. We are to go forward with the Labour party to 1908. Even the Fabian Society has suggested that the national minimum wage would result in the loss of 880,000 jobs.

I could say much more, but given the lateness of the hour and the desire of my hon. Friends to make their own contributions, I will bring my remarks to a close. I cannot do so, however, without referring again to the sheer effrontery of the Labour party and of the so-called Liberal Democrats, who demonstrated tonight no comprehension or understanding of business. Labour is unwilling to suggest what its policies will cost. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East spoke for 39 minutes, and only in the final minute did he refer to his own policies. Did he tell us what their cost would be? No, because the Opposition are scared to give the House and the country that information. The businesses of this country can be safe only in the hands of the Conservative party and of a Conservative Government.

9.5 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was cheered by Conservative Members when he stressed the importance of the contribution by engineers and scientists to high-tech industries. In the aerospace and defence industries today, those very workers are being made unemployed because of the Government's strategy, and they are forced to join the dole queues because no alternative employment is available to them. That is a criminal waste of the very skills that the Government claim with such determination they want to encourage.

South-west England's aerospace industry is being devastated by Britain's changing defence needs and by the general rundown of the country's manufacturing capacity as a result of the Government's economic policies and the recession. Aerospace has been a distinctive feature of the south-west's economy since the beginning of the 20th century. The region accounts for more than 10 per cent. of all aerospace employment and for more than one third of the industry's manufacturing capacity.

In the south-west, the defence sector employs directly or supports 155,000 jobs, which represents the highest degree of job dependency of any region in the United Kingdom. When one speaks of manufacturing industry in the south-west, one is talking about high-tech industries involved in aerospace and defence work—but they are suffering unguided and unplanned changes as a consequence of the Government's economic policies.

A recent report conservatively estimated that 60,000 direct jobs and 12,000 support jobs will be lost in the aerospace and defence industries. That would have a devastating effect on the south-west. Earlier, the Secretary of State made a statement on Cumbria, and spoke of the importance of not allowing a region to decline. The south-west is on the verge of just such a decline.

The south-west has 49 aerospace establishments employing 32,000 workers, scientists, and engineers. They are in the forefront of a technology that is vital to the future and security of our manufacturing base. The names of the companies involved are world famous. They include British Aerospace—the biggest manufacturing employer. Ten years ago, it employed 10,000 people, but now has a work force of only a few thousand. It has made particularly dramatic cuts in its dynamics sector in Bristol. There is no long-term security for British Aerospace in Plymouth.

Rolls-Royce, another giant manufacturer, has consistently shed jobs over the past 10 years. Dowty Fuel Systems, Aerospace, Normal Air Garrett, Westland Helicopters—the list goes on. Thousands of jobs are being lost now in our region, and thousands more will follow. If we add to that the fate of Plymouth dockyards, Devonport, and the dramatic reduction in the work force there, we can see the Government's criminal waste of the most highly skilled members of our industrial manufacturing companies.

But there are alternatives to such comprehensive cuts in the south-west economy. It is important that aerospace and civil aerospace are strengthened and that we find ways of using the skills of the workers who will undoubtedly become unemployed, and rightly so, as we shift and reduce our defence expenditure so that they are no longer needed to produce the weapons of destruction. But do not believe that those skills are not needed in our economy, because they are—desperately.

All those problems are caused by interest rates, the exchange rate and the fact that the Government have done nothing to stop the growth in international sub-contracting whereby British companies which have the contracts give the work to workers in other countries—contracts subsidised by British taxpayers, who are giving work to people in Texas instead of in Bristol, Hatfield or anywhere else in Britain.

If we reduce our defence expenditure, something to which I am passionately committed, billions of pounds will become available for a range of alternative spending. But part of it must go on retraining and the encouragement of alternative sectors.

Let us consider what the workers are capable of doing. Environmental technologies are so desperately needed now as we face the problems of our environment. Those people have the skills to respond in those industries. Space and telecommunications research and development need those workers. We need efficient, effective, cheap and environmentally friendly transport systems. Those workers have the skills to produce them. We talk about high tech and we emulate and praise the Japanese and the Germans. We have the skills and the workers, but we refuse to invest in their talents and abilities to build a strong manufacturing base for the future which will produce the value-added goods that we so desperately need.

Let nobody say that it is up to the companies only. The Government, through their various policies, can have a dramatic effect on the future of those high-tech workers. First, they should make up their mind on their defence policy and stop the indecision in their procurement policies, which is making the future of those companies so insecure. They should decide on our defence needs and what we need to produce, and then transfer the workers to diversification to ensure that we use their skills. The Government should do something about interest rates and exhange rates and ensure that, instead of allowing

[Ms. Dawn Primarolo]

companies to have money from British taxpayers to employ people in Texas, it is a condition that they employ people here in Britain.

Those people have enormous skills and talents. That the south-west can benefit from and contribute to the future of a strong, vibrant high-technology base is indisputable. If the Government do not respond to the crisis that the companies face, they will be wasting skills. Their talk of education and high skills will be nothing but rhetoric and they will deserve the contempt in which many of the electorate in the south-west hold the Government.

9.13 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The Opposition's motion is one of sheer effrontery. The most brazen piece of effrontery was when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) talked about the need for unity in respect of Europe. He should have seen the look on the face of his right hon. the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and he should have listened to the pregnant silence of the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

It is also an act of sheer effrontery for the Labour party to pose as the friend of industry. It is as hypocritical for it to do that as it would have been for King Herod to join the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The Labour party does not understand the role of profit in the economy. It does not understand that prosperity comes only by industry producing the right goods of the right quality at the right price. Labour fails to recognise that the only way to secure prosperity in an economy is to have economic change.

This evening, the Opposition have come here hankering after the sunset industries and the past. The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) said that the Government do not have a policy for the north. Little do he and the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) realise that the hundreds of millions of pounds poured in to British Shipbuilders by the last Labour Government was money wasted. Little do they recognise that attracting Nissan to Sunderland has done more for the prosperity of the north of England and for the motor car industry than anything that the last Labour Government did.

We have listened to the Labour party talking about the need to produce the conditions for greater prosperity. Yet Labour Members opposed the Education Reform Act 1988. At a time when people are worried about technological education, what is Labour's reaction? It is to promise to get rid of city technology colleges—to return to the past.

At a time when people thought that industrial relations could not be reformed, the Labour party opposed every change that was made to improve industrial relations in our country. The Labour party supported the bully boy and the thug—it supported Scargill rather than the right of individuals to work.

The part of British industry that is thriving today, that is enjoying massive increases in productivity and investment and is meeting the needs of consumers is the sector of industry that was privatised by the Government. There is as much as 60 per cent. growth in productivity in privatised industries and increases in investment of up to 50 per cent., but Labour opposed every step that produced those circumstances. The Labour party is the natural party of unemployment.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) *rose*——

Mr. Marshall: No, I shall not give way because there are only a few minutes left and the hon. Gentleman has only just come into the debate. I will give him a lift home tonight, but I will not let him interrupt my speech.

The Labour party is the natural party of unemployment. All Labour Governments have left office with unemployment higher than when they entered office. The Labour party is committed to a minimum national wage. It says that that will not create another two million unemployed—only another 1 million or 1·5 million. Whatever the figure, it is a national scandal that any Member of Parliament should seek to legislate another person into unemployment. How can any member of the Labour party go to the country and say that he or she has a social conscience when Labour Members are condemning some of their constituents to the dole queue? That is an act of gross inhumanity and deserves the condemnation of all hon. Members.

We heard the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East quote City circulars, like some third-rate secondary banker. He forgot to tell us that Goldman Sachs has said that a Labour Government would lead to a 3 per cent. increase in interest rates. One cannot borrow or spend on the scale that he proposes without raising interest rates, and higher interest rates would lead to lower and not higher investment.

The Labour party is committed to policies which would ruin British industry. The prosperity of this country will come not through socialism but through the social market economy.

9.17 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I commend the Opposition motion, which speaks up for the thousands of businesses, large and small, that have been driven to the wall by the damaging effects of this Government's economic policies.

The motion also acknowledges the shock waves of deep recession that have reverberated throughout every region of our country, not least the west midlands, which has once again been ravaged by the slump. The motion recognises the real personal casualties of this crisis—hundreds of thousands of men and women. Many of them have been cast on the scrap heap of unemployment for the second time in the past 13 years of this wasted Government, with the financial and psychological damage attendant on the loss of a job, the loss of dignity and the loss of the pay packet, which is the only real sense of independence that is worth having for people in this society. When I read the Government's amendment, I was stunned by its deceptively self-congratulatory tone, which insults the business men and women who are now desperately trying to save bankruptcies and closures.

Hon. Members may know the old saying "Some chicken! Some neck!" What a nerve the Government have —telling us in their amendment that they welcome

"the transformation of the British economy over the last 12 years".

The past 12 years of this Administration, in the so-called "enterprise culture", would be more accurately described as 12 years of candy floss culture. No better example of the

Government's economic policies, and the failure of those policies, can be provided than the decline of manufacturing in the west midlands over the past 12 years. The Government's bequest to the people of Britain has been the experience of two major slumps and a mad inflationary rush to win the 1987 general election, along with a deteriorating share of world trade and world economic influence.

In the past year, the economy of the west midlands has become considerably poorer. Both the west midlands CBI and the chambers of commerce paint a depressing picture: They show the region to be in a deepening recession, with 15 per cent. of firms saying that they expect demand to fall in the next four months. None of them expects it to rise. Only in Wales were business men more pessimistic about the level of business confidence; it is not surprising that it is lower in the west midlands than in any other English region.

Investment is also suffering as a result of the Government's economic policies. The west midlands chambers of commerce said recently that the deepest recession was being felt there, and that home manufacturing orders were at their lowest, with 58 per cent. of companies reporting a fall. The quarterly economic survey shows that manufacturing companies of all sizes expect domestic and export orders to fall by a large percentage.

The latest quarterly economic figures of the chamber of commerce in my own town, Wolverhampton, lists some depressing trade and industry statistics. Only 3 per cent. of companies report any improvement in home deliveries, while 54 per cent. report a decline; 11 per cent. report a rise in home orders, while 54 per cent. report a fall. As for productivity in manufacturing—there are 12,000 jobs in engineering—only 3 per cent. of companies say that they are working to full capacity. Eleven per cent. are working to 80 per cent. of full capacity, while 64 per cent. are working to below 60 per cent. capacity; 22 per cent. are in such a state that they will not survive, and will be forced to go bankrupt.

Only 3 per cent. of companies have increased staff numbers, while 61 per cent. have reduced them and 36 per cent. say that they intend to lose more workers in the next few months. Those are the grim realities in Wolverhampton, and in many other towns.

I should have liked to say more about the complacent attitude of the Department of Trade and Industry, and the role that Ministers have played in this sorry tale. Companies in my constituency that turned to the DTI for help were turned away as though they did not exist. They have not received the help that they should have been given.

I wish to finish on what, for us, may be a happier note and quote the words of Omar Khayyam:

> "Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
> Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
> Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"

The heart's desire of the people is to start again and to have a new Government and new policies. We shall receive their support and there will be a new Labour Government in the next 12 months.

9.25 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): This has been a timely debate on a vital subject and there were some powerful contributions to it. There were also, however, some somewhat strange speeches, given the economic situation, particularly by Conservative Members, not least the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I was certainly alarmed that he did not seem to recognise the escalation in unemployment and the misery that that represents, and there was no real recognition of the depth of the recession which is affecting people in Britain much more dramatically than people elsewhere.

There were, of course, the usual cheap jibes about my hon. Friends and I on the Labour Trade and Industry Front-Bench team. I am happy to let industry judge at the next election which policies it prefers—the choice will be clear, and I think I know which choice it will make.

Not surprisingly, all my right hon. and hon. Friends referred to the steep rise in unemployment. There is obviously great concern about it in each of their constituencies. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) listed redundancies in the north-west. My hon. Friends the Members for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter), for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell), for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland), for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner)—I apologise if I have missed anyone—gave vivid examples from their areas.

Among the features of the debate were the contributions by hon. Members from different regions, all of them worried about the effects of the recession. Last time we had a severe recession, in the early 1980s, it particularly affected certain regions, including mine. I derive no satisfaction, however, from the fact that the current recession affects Britain as a whole. All regions are affected. Manufacturing and service sectors and traditional and modern industries are affected. It is clear that the recession is affecting the heartlands of Conservative Members. For that reason, at the next election it will not be possible for the Conservative party to try to make some exclusive appeal to areas that are not suffering. The effects of the Government's policies will be clear, even to their supporters.

Unemployment will be a big issue until the election. Even according to the Government's fiddled figures, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley referred, the level is appallingly high and there are worries that it will top 3 million before long. Allied to that is the concern over the number of business bankruptcies in recent months. Many examples were quoted during the debate. In addition, once again, there is a worsening trade balance. The figures this week were twice as bad as expected, with both visibles and invisibles doing badly.

In this distressing picture, it appears that accountancy is the only growth profession. This week, I read that in 1990 Britain's eight big accountancy firms earned fees totalling £226·4 million from receiverships, liquidations and administrations—an increase of 63 per cent. on what they had made from insolvencies the previous year.

I was interested also to read in the press this week that the Government were thinking of linking in some way to performance the salary of the next head of the Central Statistical Office. I am sure that Employment or Trade and Industry Ministers would not like to be subject to performance-related pay at present. They would find that, with industry in recession and unemployment rising, their pay would be dropping dramatically.

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

In one of my local newspapers—the *Newcastle Journal*—I read a brief description of the Government's economic record, written by one of the paper's economic commentators:

"My recollection of the 10 years is of two recessions and a middle bit of rampaging borrowing and rampaging prices which led to rampaging inflation and rampaging interest rates. A fair summary?

The middle bit boom—nobody seems to call it 'the miracle' any more—was consumer-led as booms tend to be, and consumers were borrowing like mad, and companies were borrowing like mad to keep up with them, and we all wound up the creek."

It is clear that the recession in Britain is deeper than that elsewhere. This week we also heard the predictions of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that Britain under its present Administration would be the slowest to recover from it.

It was clear from the debate that wide-ranging criticisms of the Government's general economic policies are being voiced by those who were once thought to be the Government's friends and by groups in industry at the sharp end trying to produce, sell and export in today's recessionary circumstances.

The Engineering Employers Federation has reported a dramatic fall in engineering orders, with the slide expected to last well into next year. The construction sector also experienced a sharp fall in output in the first quarter, compared with the last quarter of 1990. Eighty per cent. of construction firms expect lower output during the next 12 months.

The balance of payments deficit in specific sectors is very great. In electronics, it now runs to billions of pounds, having increased from the small deficit that existed when the Conservatives came into office. It is not surprising that many of my hon. Friends also mentioned the machine tools sector, as it is vital to a manufacturing economy. However, that sector is in considerable difficulty.

Many more examples could be quoted. For example, I noticed this week that shoe imports now represent 72 per cent. of the market, which is another alarming figure.

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood) *rose—*

Ms. Quin: In that picture of gloom, neither the Department of Trade and Industry nor the Treasury seem to have any idea what to do about it. The Chancellor had his one weapon of interest rates, but I think that he will be dubbed—

Mr. Redwood: Nearly all Labour's policy prescriptions involve the expenditure of more public money. Will the hon. Lady tell the House how much extra money above our spending levels she can pledge for the DTI's budget?

Ms. Quin: Perhaps the Minister should wait for the first Budget of a Labour Government. Indeed, I do not know of any Government who have made the detailed prediction for which he asks.

Neither the DTI nor the Treasury seem to have any idea what to do in the circumstances. I believe that the Chancellor will be dubbed the Mr. Micawber Chancellor who is waiting for something—anything—to turn up. The faintest stirrings seem enough to give him hope that something will turn up.

During the debate there have been criticisms of specific policies. Several hon. Members mentioned especially the weakening of our export services and the Bill that is currently going through the House to privatise the Export Credits Guarantee Department or, at least, its short-term division. It is not only the privatisation that is causing concern in industry, but the fact that we charge higher premiums than our competitors.

I should like to point out the irony of the fact that the Government are rightly under pressure because of the effect of bank charges on small businesses. However, the Government's own financial arm—the ECGD—charges much higher premiums to industry than do most of its competitors in Europe. Unfortunately, the ECGD seems to be able to cover fewer and fewer markets, even though, at a time of great trade deficit, one would think that we would want to encourage access to more markets for the future. That loss of markets at a crucial time is grave, and perhaps the Government should read the swingeing criticisms in the report of the export group for the construction industries, which is entitled "Farewell to the Third World". It laments the fact that Government support for access to third-world markets is practically non-existent these days.

The Government have also introduced policies such as the sale of the British Technology Group, which has been described as one of the most successful technology transfer companies in the world but, as we know, the Government do not like to hear about any successes in the public sector. Senior scientists have protested that Britain is falling behind its international competitors in research and have accused Ministers of a lack of encouragement and cash commitment. Labour published its own science programme earlier this week.

Not surprisingly, several hon. Members, including many of my hon. Friends, have referred to the difficulties that small businesses are experiencing. Small firms are caught deep in the recession, with output during the past four months plunging more quickly than at any time in the past four years. According to the CBI survey, three out of four small firms are now working below capacity. Besides having difficulties with the banks, small firms have also encountered other difficulties, some of which are the result of Government policies.

Small businesses are worried about the uniform business rate, plus that fact that many small business men, especially those who live in flats above their shop, are also faced with paying expensive poll tax bills, often for inadequate accommodation. There is also the problem of the bad debts that small companies have to face, added to which has been the problem of the over-zealous VAT man, who has pursued small businesses, often causing them considerable difficulties.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): A moment ago, the hon. Lady said that we would have to wait for the first Budget of a Labour Chancellor. However, the Labour party's own document contains one commitment—to a minimum wage. Can the hon. Lady tell all the small business men in my constituency exactly how they would be helped immediately a Labour Government came to power if they had to pay a minimum wage to every single person in their organisation, amounting to £136 per week, which Labour would then raise to a minimum wage of £204 a week to achieve two thirds of the median?

Ms. Quin: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's figures but, given all the discussions about a minimum wage, I am absolutely amazed that no Conservative Member has talked about the problem of low pay in our country today. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the wage differentials in France and in Germany, he will see that they have remained more or less the same during the past decade, whereas in Britain the gap between the well-off and those at the bottom of the scale has widened dramatically. I should like to hear Conservative Members expressing some concern about that fact.

Small businesses have experienced a great deal of difficulty in recent weeks and months and it is a tragedy that there is no overall Government policy for small businesses. Conservative Members should consider the range of policies that affect small businesses at present. Not content with clobbering small businesses, the Government have been making life difficult for this country's large businesses. Perhaps the Government's only small business creation policy has been to make life so difficult for the large businesses that they are forced to contract.

Many hon. Members of all parties have referred to ICI and to Hanson's possible acquisition of it. Although Conservative Members who have spoken about that matter this evening have tended to support their Minister's view, there are deep divisions about this issue in the Conservative ranks. It has been reported that the hon. Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), for Slough (Mr. Watts), for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) are all opposed to Hanson making a take-over bid for ICI, and that they would press for its referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That contrasts with the hands-off or non-interventionist approach of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

It is a tragedy that some of our large businesses and industries have contracted so dramatically during the Tories' term of office. Many hon. Members have mentioned shipbuilding, and I fully share their concerns about the scandal of the closure of the Sunderland shipyard. We are worried about the future of other yards, too.

The Scottish steel industry has also been forced to contract dramatically. It is a tragedy that the Clydesdale tube works closed on the day of the ceasefire in the Gulf when the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was urging British firms to become involved in opportunities in rebuilding the middle east. The Clydesdale tube works produced a product which no other firm in the United Kingdom produced, so its closure was a blow not only to the Scottish steel industry but to our future balance of payments.

I realise that I have little time left if I am to keep within the time that I have been allocated. Many criticisms have been made of the Government's policy by not only Opposition Members but by Conservative Members. I suggest that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and his colleagues look closely at the House of Lords *Hansard* for Tuesday of this week. In the debate on the Export Credits Guarantee Bill, 19 Members of the other place spoke. Only one spoke in favour of the Government's proposal and that was the Government's spokesperson. The other 18 spoke against the Bill and they included two former Tory Cabinet Ministers, two former Ministers of State with responsibility for trade and export credit and many senior industrialists from our major industries. All of them opposed what the Government are doing. No wonder that at the end of the debate the Government spokesperson, beleaguered as he was, said that he did not know which was worse, having to face the rifle fire from the Government Benches or having to listen to the menacing rumble of the heavy artillery behind him.

An ex-Cabinet Minister quoted in *The Guardian* today—it is a quote taken from the *Washington Post*, so someone else is going round the world talking about the Government's record—spoke about the Department of Trade and Industry and the Government.

"We haven't got a team and we haven't got a theme. There is no sense of direction. When you've been in power 12 years there are no alibis. You can't blame Labour or the unions or the bloody foreigners."

Precisely. There is no scapegoat. It is the Government's responsibility and it is the Government who are to blame.

I saw a recent headline in a newspaper about the forthcoming speech by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. It said:

"Lilley sets out to woo industry."

Some courtship. If the Secretary of State went ahead and booked a table for two with industry he would end up either staring at the candlelight alone or finding himself in an almighty row with his partner. If his recent actions are part of a courtship with industry, how on earth does he behave when the relationship turns sour?

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) said that, if the Government were so proud of their record and so happy about what was happening in industry at present, why did they not call a general election now? The truth is that industry has been dosed with the wrong medicine for far too long. It is not only industry's health which is suffering badly as a result; it is that of the country as a whole. Only a change to Labour would bring us back to health and give hope for the future to industry and those who work in it.

9.43 pm

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): Today we have heard clearly the difference between the two sides of the House. The Opposition have an industry policy that looks back to the 1960s and 1970s, which failed then and would fail again. We have an industry policy which is in line with the best experience around the world and gives British industry the opportunity and the conditions in which it can compete and become world-beating.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) that manufacturing is important. My experience in manufacturing taught me that. It taught me how crucial manufacturing industry is to Britain and its future. That is why I and my hon. Friends welcome the record levels of orders reported by my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) at British Aerospace and why we are proud of many of the successes that British industrial companies are recording day after day. They are doing extremely well in international markets.

Opposition Members should move that the way to help British industry is to be confident about it and to be proud of its achievements, not to run it down constantly and accentuate the negative and the lousy, which they always have a habit of finding.

[Mr. John Redwood]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) rightly asked where the money was coming from to pay for the policies that some Opposition Members espouse. Where is the beef in that policy? We heard again from the shadow spokesperson, the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), that there is no extra money. She was unable to tell us of a single extra penny over and above the current Department of Trade and Industry budget. We know that the shadow Cabinet will not allow any extra money for industry. The basis of Labour party policy is nonsense. It cannot deliver, and it knows that its policy would not work.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) ran down British design and research. Why did he not tell us of the successes of the pharmaceutical industry? Why did he not tell us that motor industry manufacturers are coming to this country to recruit engineers and designers to plan and make their new models? The car industry is flourishing despite the problems with domestic demand because it is exporting, exporting and exporting again. It is now making models in this country that people want to buy on the world market. They are produced at the right price in the right quantity. The hon. and learned Gentleman, who is the industry spokesman for the Liberal party, seemed totally unaware of that party's policy on motor cars. It wants to tax them and tax them again to drive them off the road. Some support that would provide to the industry.

Mr. Leadbitter *rose*——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: I shall take one intervention.

Mr. Leadbitter: Does the Minister consider that a 51 per cent. increase in unemployment during the years of the Conservative Administration is a successful hallmark of industrial policy?

Mr. Redwood: Every Labour Administration has raised unemployment. Since 1979, under the policies of the Conservative Government, hundreds of thousands of new jobs have been created and many new companies have been established. The hon. Gentleman knows that, but he cannot bear the truth. In many constituencies held by the Opposition, unemployment is lower today than it was at the previous election. They know that, and we know that, and they should be pleased about the way in which industry has developed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) rightly pointed out that many aspects of Labour policy could be a violation of the treaty of Rome. The Labour party, in its new European clothes, should take that matter far more seriously than it seems to be doing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) enriched our debate with his account of the history of Trafford Park under a Labour Administration. He reminded us just how difficult it was in those days for industries to grow and develop because they did not get a fair deal from Government. They get justice and fairness from the Conservative Government in decisions that are made which affect the lives of those industries. I can reassure my hon. Friend about training. There is a guarantee of a training place for all 16 and 17-year-olds not in employment or education. We are rightly proud of that pledge, and we intend to honour it.

The Opposition should also note that the Department of Employment's expenditure on training, enterprise and vocational training is two and a half times more in real terms than the amount that the Labour Government spent in their last full year of office. There is the policy on training, there is the commitment and there is the money to pay for it. The money is there because we have presided over a successful economy in the past decade, and we have generated the wealth and the tax revenues to provide that money.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the Minister tell the House where on earth is the economic miracle of the Tory party?

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. Gentleman waits a little, he will hear about the successes we have had in rebuilding the country's economy and developing it in a way in which his party was unable to do.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): In my constituency there are 1,000 more jobs than there were in 1979. Unemployment was 14 per cent., but it is now 5 per cent. That is the economic miracle.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that powerful intervention, which speaks for itself.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) about the importance of entrepreneurs, deregulation and a competitive market. That is the proper industrial strategy that gives entrepreneurs the ability to compete and do well. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his praise of the technical and vocational education initiative, TVEI, which has been a successful programme. My hon. Friend is also right to stress the need for interchange between business and the civil service. We have already established the Bridge programme. We have been recruiting experts from the private sector into the Department's insurance division because we believe that such interchange is most useful and that there are things to learn both ways.

I was sorry to hear of the job losses in Crewe, Paisley North, Wolverhampton and Blyth Valley and of the pain that the downturn in demand has caused—*[Interruption.]* Of course I am, as are all of my hon. Friends, and it is humbug to suggest otherwise. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) put it in context and made it clear that the interventionist policies recommended by Opposition Members would make the position worse rather than better. The policy of trying to back winners would back losers and waste money. The policy of intervening in British industry would mean industry performing less well than it does when left to its own decision-making powers.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) won the prize for the worst joke of the debate with his bad joke about the Governor of the Bank of England. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley said, Labour Members are always running down industry. He rightly pointed out that we have many fine companies, and he enlivened the debate with some good examples and positive information to show how industry is doing well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) spelled out the great dangers of Labour levels of inflation——

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: I have been given little time in which to reply to a long debate. I cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman, much as I should like to do so.

I will make sure that the Treasury is aware of the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover about taxation. He is right about inflation. It must be curbed for the benefit of industry and commerce.

I did not recognise the one-sided picture of Tyneside described by the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland). He made insufficient mention of the massive new foreign investment that has come into the area. He neglected to talk about the recovery in spending and activity seen on Tyneside in recent years and welcomed by my hon. Friends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) made an important case about interest rates and banks. I will ensure that the Chancellor's attention is drawn to it before the conduct of his review on the important matter of interest to British industry.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) is right to take an interest in the switch from military to civil work. She should also take an interest in her party's defence policies, which would mean a massive reduction in demand for defence supplies, far worse than anything envisaged in the review of "Options for Change" that we have carried out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was right in what he said about Labour and Europe. The Opposition are certainly split on Europe. He was also right about the true origins of prosperity and the need for structural change.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, at the end of an extraordinary bad speech, made six very modest policy recommendations as an afterthought. The six points would, he said, transform British industry. He said that Labour would modernise regional grants, but he did not say that they had any new money with which to modernise them. We are still waiting to hear what a modern regional grant looks like compared with our targeted sensible regional grants, about which we heard earlier in a statement on Barrow and Furness.

The hon. Gentleman said that the important point was that the Opposition would tell British Steel what to do. In other words, they would replace the successes generated by the management and employees over the past 10 years with the disasters of the 1970s and interventionist policies. *[Interruption.]* These recommendations were given by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, and I am responding to the pathetic list of things that he said would represent Labour's policy.

He said that Labour would try to block a takeover bid that has not yet been mounted. He said that we should legislate on cartels. We have been getting on with the work of busting them. We busted eight cartels last year, and we shall bust any others where the evidence becomes available.

The hon. Gentleman said that Labour would set up regional development agencies. That would be another adventure in quangoland for the Labour party, and most of the money would go on the quangos and not on the people who should benefit from it. He also promised to boost research and development expenditure, at industry's cost, without saying how he would encourage it and without offering a penny of Labour's public money that it does not have. At the same time, industry's profitability would be demolished by all of Labour's other policies of high inflation, high taxation and hostility to profits.

Every statement coming from the Labour Front Bench these days exudes hatred of profitability. The Opposition still do not understand that profitability is necessary for investment and that, if we want to invest in water, telephones and new utility systems, we need profits to do so.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The motion refers to small firms. I declare an interest as the chairman of a small firm. I would like to take back an answer from the Minister to the young men out of whose efforts, I guarantee, I get nothing. We are not paid by big firms. They are using us as a bank. What does the Department of Trade and Industry intend to do about that?

Mr. Redwood: I am well aware of the problem of late payment and will deal with it later, if time permits.

The most heartening aspect of today's debate is that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East should have chosen to discuss the recession. Whenever he has highlighted an issue in the past and said that no solution was in sight under this Government, there have been improvements in the following year. On 24 October 1989, the hon. Gentleman told us that the trade deficit was worsening. He accused the then Chancellor of denying that there was a problem and said that he had no solution to it. In September 1989, the deficit was £1,994 million. Just one year later it had fallen to £88 million. Where is the apology for that howler?

On 22 November 1989, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East told the House that no problem that Britain and British industry faced was greater than the trade deficit. He again implied that the Government had no answer. A year later, in November 1990, the deficit was £1,34[illegible] million lower than when he spoke. Again, the hon. Gentleman did not even say sorry.

On 6 March 1990, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East criticised me for saying in a speech that his timing on the trade deficit was all wrong. I had said that it would fall, and he had said that it would not. He became quite dogmatic when challenged on the issue. In March 1990, when I made my speech, the trade deficit was more than £2,000 million. It fell to about £750 million just one year later. What has the hon. Gentleman to say about that now? Why should we believe any of his other predictions when he has such a bad forecasting record?

On 22 March 1990, the deceptive misuse of statistics and forecasts by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East took a decisive turn for the worse. That was just possible, despite the previous record. He said that we had a deficit in invisibles, but in 1990 we recorded a surplus of more than £4,000 million in invisibles—[HON. MEMBERS: "And now?"] We are still recording a surplus. The hon. Gentleman said that in aviation, shipping, services and consultancies we were running a trade deficit, yet last year all the services yielded a huge suplus of more than £5,000 million. The hon. Gentleman has made blunder after blunder.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is obviously hoping for an opportunity in a leadership election, because the defects of the current Leader of the Opposition are becoming all too clear. That was evident in his most recent

[Mr. Redwood]

statement on European monetary union. I wonder whether, when Opposition Members are given time in another debate, they will be able to explain what the Leader of the Opposition meant by his extraordinary 228 words on the subject of monetary union. No newspaper or independent commentator could understand it, and leading experts gave it marks of 0 out of 10 or 3 out of 10. They all marked it as a failure, and so do we.

I understand why the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is keen to move on from trade and industry and why he thinks he may soon have a chance, with a possible challenge to the leadership. The Leader of the Opposition is said to have purged his party of Militant and to have put behind him the spectre of division. He will certainly need to do so if the Labour party is ever to be credible to British business. However, that claim appears absurd today because, in Wirral, the hard left faction suffered a reversal through the electorate. In Liverpool's council, a large Militant faction opposes a Labour faction, and in Liverpool, Walton, the new unity of the Labour party is displayed by the fact that two socialist candidates are on offer in the next by-election there.

The Leader of the Opposition is also said to have united his party on Europe. He has united it behind a seventh change in policy. In 1983, he said that he wanted the country out of the Common Market, but he now poses as a good European. In 1988, he said that Britain's membership of the Common Market had brought few of the benefits anticipated by its advocates. But he now sings vague love songs about a more European policy to benefit the British economy. Are Opposition Members happy with the policy that their leadership is putting forward on that subject? I am sure that they are not. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is not happy about transferring more economic powers to Europe.

I wish that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) were in his place. I am sure that he does not want to lobby European Commissioners instead of raising issues on the Floor of the House. Nor do the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and many trade unionists wish to see social policy and trade union matters taken out of their hands, if the Labour party were ever in a position to do that. No wonder that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East senses that his time might be coming.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 183, Noes 277.

Division No. 174] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its determination to defeat inflation and on the increasing success of that policy; recognises that industry's first priority

[Mr. Speaker]

is the defeat of inflation so that growth can be resumed; welcomes the transformation of the British economy over the last 12 years; rejects the pro-inflationary policies of the Opposition who would increase public spending and borrowing, provoke a pay explosion and take risks with the exchange rate; and condemns their anti-industry policies of nationalisation, intervention and punitive taxation which would threaten the Government's remarkable achievement.

Toxic Waste (Wentworth)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am delighted to have secured this Adjournment debate, and to have this opportunity to raise a matter of grave importance to my constituency. I am glad also that it should take place today, as this week marks the second anniversary of the arrival of a consignment of toxic waste that should never have reached South Yorkshire.

The toxic waste to which I refer is in Wath upon Dearne, in the Dearne valley, in the northern part of my constituency. It was once a green, lush meadow valley, with rich wildlife, woods, and rivers.

The latter part of the 19th century saw the rapid pace of deep mining and the industrial revolution, which brought its problems as well as jobs. The coalfield developed rapidly—it has closed at an even faster pace. The pits of Dearne valley have closed, the science laboratories have gone, and the railway marshalling yards —which Lord Haw Haw threatened to destroy on several occasions during the second world war—have gone as well. That was not done by the Luftwaffe but caused by the experience of the last few years.

That railway complex included a locomotive shed, which was obtained by a company named Wath Aluminium. It was succeeded by another company, Wath Recycling. For whatever reason, Wath Recycling received a consignment of waste from the FMC fertiliser factory at Baltimore, in the United States of America.

When that material arrived, it was found to be heavily contaminated by what I have previously described as a cocktail of poisons—a number of dangerous carcinogenic substances. The first batch arrived on 9 June. Local rumour developed in July, when I asked to visit the works. Then a local journalist discovered that secret meetings were being held to consider the grave nature of the substances that had arrived in Wath upon Dearne.

At that time, the substances were stored in an open-fronted shed, partially covered by tarpaulin. As soon as I found out, I asked to see the Minister of State, now the Secretary of State for Wales. He saw me immediately. I demanded that the material be securely contained.

By the end of October, it was contained. During the period of containment, workers wearing protective clothing and masks spent 15 minutes at a time putting the material into drums. However, it had been in the open, quite close to the homes where thousands of people lived, for a long period before then.

At that stage, I brought a deputation from my constituency led by the mayor of Rotherham, Councillor Hughes, who has been a friend of mine since boyhood. We were young councillors together when we agitated for a wide economic base because we knew that the mines would close. We did not anticipate that they would close at the pace that they did. Councillor Hughes and I have long pressed for the Dearne valley to be prepared to be green again.

Councillor Hughes was accompanied by Canon Michael Wright, the vicar of Wath upon Dearne—a man of enormous significance in our community; a local general practitioner, Dr. David Plews; and two local business men, Mr. Bedford and Mr. Binns, representing

various parts of the local community. We saw the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who received us very courteously, and expressed the hope that the material would be gone by Christmas—Christmas 1989. I shall end my relatively short speech by telling the Minister that I hope that the material will be gone by Christmas 1991.

The Americans disputed the responsibility for some of the poisonous material. In March 1990 I went to Washington and met the members of the American company, FMC. They admitted that they were responsible for a number of the chemicals in that cocktail—the benzines, fluorons and PCBs. However, they flatly refused to accept responsibility for some of the heavy metals.

The case was taken to the British courts in February 1990 and they decided that they had no jurisdiction since the contract was signed between FMC and a company associated with Wath Recycling. The case should then have proceeded to the courts in the United States.

In March of this year, Mr. Nicholas Rowe of *The Independent*, who wrote a splendid article in that newspaper, ascertained on questioning the company that not only had it not embarked on litigation in the United States but that there seemed to be no certainty that it would do so.

Then, with Councillor Sir Jack Layden, leader of Rotherham council, and Councillor Jack Carr, the chairman of the environmental health committee, I saw the Minister for the Environment and Countryside again and asked him to make sure that there was legal action.

At the moment, as the Minister knows, we have welcomed a succession of Ministers from the Department of the Environment. We have shown the Department, and it accepts, that we have superb plans for the future of the Dearne valley. We are being helped by the Department of the Environment. Immediately to the north of the site, work is proceeding on reclaiming a large area of land which, in a short time, will be green. The Government have given us financial support for that.

But we are spending a lot of public money, central and local, to give hope to and to regenerate the Dearne valley, while this satanic mill, this sordid site, remains sticking out like a sore thumb it limits our hope.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): My hon. Friend has been patient and tolerant over the lack of progress in shifting the drums of toxic waste. My constituents, who live in the constituency adjacent to that of my hon. Friend, are also extremely concerned not only about the possible effect of wind should deterioration set in or in the event of a fire, but because the longer the toxic drums stand there and rot, the more likely it is that the toxic waste will seep into the water table beneath. It is a twin problem, and my hon. Friend has shown remarkable restraint. Will he consider transporting the toxic drums to the Department of the Environment so that we can see the remarkable progress that there would be in shifting them back. I would gladly assist my hon. Friend in bringing those drums to the Department.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is risking leading me astray. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that some months ago my hon. Friend, concerned as he is for his constituents, presented a motion to the House calling on me to bring a drum of the material to Westminster, indeed into the House. I would have been willing to do that, but I think that you were not quite so enthusiastic at the prospect. However, I must admit that many of my constituents would be highly delighted if I did bring a drum here.

I drew up a list of constituencies of Ministers with appropriate responsibility and I suggested that we place a collection of the drums in their constituencies, many but not all of which are in the south, though that of the Minister for the Environment and Countryside certainly is not. Many of my constituents believe that if the waste were in the south of England the Government would have been rather more active in securing a solution. But that would probably be uncharitable, because I know that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside has worked hard on the matter.

The difficulty is that the Government take the view that recycling is an important industry, that it is profitable and it can bring a lot of overseas earnings to Britain. It is important that we have a recycling industry. There is a limit to the amount of materials in the world that the industry handles and we must recycle. But recycling industries should be substantial. The company in this case at the time of importation had 100 £1 issued shares and I believe that the principal shareholder is a Dutch metal trader and company director called Mr. Weinstock with a residence in Hertfordshire, certainly not in Wath upon Dearne.

If we are to have a vigorous recycling industry, it must be conducted by substantial businesses which are governed by adequate legislation. This case does not give grounds for comfort about the nature and quality of legislation in force in Britain.

Our area has been economically devastated in recent years, and if it is to see the economic advances that it desperately needs they must be accompanied—indeed preceded—by the environmental recovery which is

I am grateful for the consideration that the Government have given to the matter and to Ministers for their visits. However, that money has to be accompanied by common sense in our arrangements. This is a serious matter because there are more than 2,700 drums of poisons there. As my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) has said, the prevailing wind would take any fumes or noxious airborne substances to affect his constituents.

There is justified anxiety throughout the area. For example, two or three months ago there was a fire at the works. I congratulated the South Yorkshire fire service on the speed with which it responded and I was told that the fire was not very significant and that there was no public risk because the fire had not got nearer than 18 feet to the drums. Those 2,700 drums could well be a time bomb. I do not want to use emotive language and to rouse anxiety, because there is enough of that, but we must have action.

I have a number of questions for the Minister and I hope that I have given him sufficient notice of them. I accept that I did not give him long. Given our dreadful experience, are the Government giving any thought to the need to revise national regulations? Are they prepared to amend the law to prevent such cases or to make their occurrence less likely? Could steps be taken to protect our areas, in the way that the United States and other countries have protected themselves? As the Minister is aware, under American law such material can be exported, but it cannot be taken back into the country.

[Mr. Hardy]

Does the Minister consider that an intense problem could remain at Wath, no matter what decision is taken by the American courts, partly because of American law and partly because the company may not have the resources to deal with the problem and to respond to it in the proper manner? Would the Department prepare to take immediate action if the decision of the American court relieves the American company of responsibility? The material would still be in Wath upon Dearne and we want it away, and quickly.

If the American company is found to be largely or wholly responsible, can we expect action? Could that include ensuring that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office acts with whatever vigour is required in the pursuit of British interests? I have said before that, if the boot were on the other foot, I think that the American official response would have been more strident and more positive than ours has been.

Given the delay in moving towards court action in America, which is so desperately needed—it has been delayed since February 1990—will the Government maintain sufficient interest to ensure that the case proceeds and that there is no withdrawal from it and no protracted delay? Will the Minister give assistance and approval to enable Rotherham council to take whatever steps are needed to remove the waste as soon as possible after the court case?

The Minister is aware that his hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for local government—another of his colleagues who has taken a detailed interest in the matter and has visited the locality—is visiting the area next week. If the Minister is not able to give a full response to those serious questions tonight, I hope that he will ensure that his hon. Friend does so when he is in South Yorkshire.

As I said at the beginning of the debate, there is an enormous amount at stake. The future of the area is far too important to allow the interests of a very small company to prejudice the prospects that we are seeking to develop. The area can be made decent. It is in the process of being turned green. If we do not make it decent and green, economic prospects for the area will remain benighted. Therefore it is of considerable importance at local level. The Minister will be aware that the implications of the case are of national gravity, and I look forward with great interest to hear what he has to say.

10.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has raised an important issue. Let me first explain what my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, has explained to the hon. Gentleman and other interested parties on numerous occasions—either at meetings or in correspondence—as the saga has developed.

As the hon. Gentleman has said, the matter is subject to litigation—indeed, litigation has been started. I shall say more about that shortly. We were advised by the proper regulatory authorities—the Health and Safety Executive and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—that the material in question was at present safely stored. I shall deal with that later as well, as it relates to one of the questions that the hon. Gentleman asked.

The problem of Wath began with a recycling contract that went wrong. Amlon Metals/Wath Recycling imported about 450 tonnes of copper waste for recycling from an American firm called FMC. The movement of the waste was notified as required in the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988, and it appears to have arrived in good faith in June 1989; 280 tonnes of the waste went to Wath and became partly mixed with other copper waste, and 170 tonnes were stopped at Leeds rail terminal.

Some of the waste differed from the sample specification, containing some difficult pesticide intermediates. The contract papers did not include clauses for the return of the material should the consignment be rejected.

Wath Recycling called in the relevant waste disposal authorities, West and South Yorkshire. The authorities called in HMIP and HSE to advise. Since then, HMIP has made two visits and the Health and Safety Executive 20. Both bodies advised about safety precautions and supervised the drumming of the material: in their judgment, that at Wath is now safe in 2,700 drums, and that at Leeds is also safe in seven guarded containers.

Mr. Hardy: I have noted the visits that have been made and the care that has been taken. South Yorkshire must, of course, undertake careful monitoring. I understand that the cost of that monitoring since June 1989 is now approaching six figures: obviously, a substantial burden has been imposed as a result of the importation of the waste, whoever is responsible.

Mr. Baldry: I have no reason to quarrel with the hon. Gentleman's figures. Clearly the regulatory authorities have had to be careful to ensure that the consignment is safe, and have wanted—quite properly—to respond to the concerns raised by the hon. Members for Wentworth and for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and others.

The problem now is that mixed wastes cannot be recycled at Wath. Wath wants FMC to pay damages, and to contribute to disposal costs. Both officials and Ministers have been trying to resolve the matter from an early stage. Indeed, shortly after HMIP had been brought in to help—as the hon. Member for Wentworth said—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who was then responsible for these matters, saw a delegation led by the hon. Gentleman. There has been a series of such meetings. On reflection, the hon. Member for Don Valley will probably decide, in view of the number of meetings and Ministers involved, that his criticisms were less than fair. If I were a constituency Member in his position, however, I too would urge Ministers to take further and faster action.

My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside and other Ministers have been anxious to help to resolve the situation and get the material returned to the United States—if possible—in the spirit of the Basel convention and the transfrontier regulations. On 5 February last year, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside discussed with Ron Woods, the United States deputy chief of mission, his concern over the continued presence of the waste at Wath. The latter intended to raise the matter with the appropriate

United States authorities. My hon. Friend also met the United States Environmental Protection Agency's administrator, Bill Reilly, who agreed to take a personal interest in the matter and to make direct approaches to the FMC corporation.

My Department and the United States Environmental Protection Agency have mediated in negotiations with the parties concerned in an effort to find a long-term solution which avoided lengthy litigation. Much ministerial and official time has been expended on trying to reach a workable solution to the problems at Wath.

Negotiations have broken down because the mixed wastes cannot be recycled at Wath and Wath Recycling wants FMC to pay damages and to contribute to disposal costs. Although FMC has offered to pay half the incineration costs of the material that went to Wath and negotiate further with British Rail about sharing the costs of the waste held at Leeds rail terminal, Wath Recycling has declined to respond to that offer.

My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside met representatives of Wath Recycling in September last year in another attempt to reach a positive solution and to persuade them to reopen negotiations with FMC. They were unwilling to do so.

The Department of the Environment has probably gone as far as it can in this matter, in that the next stage depends on litigation. Wath Recycling has been considering the scope for litigation, but, as the hon. Member for Wentworth made clear, the United Kingdom courts have not accepted jurisdiction. On 7 June this year, Wath Recycling filed an action in the United States for damages, loss of profit and return of the material. We understand that its case will revolve around breach of contract and offences of disposing of toxic wastes contrary to United States requirements.

The hon. Member for Wentworth asked about the future. In this issue, as in everything, we must act in accordance with the law. We have made a rigorous examination of this matter, but there are no breaches of United Kingdom consents or regulations which might require local authority consideration or action. My Department has no statutory role, except as approving authority for the export of any waste back to the United States under the transfrontier regulations.

The logical conclusion is that the disposal licence at Wath permits indefinite storage of the 2,700 drums which are not contravening any HSE requirements and the containers at Leeds rail terminal are also protected in accordance with HSE requirements. The waste materials are therefore stored safely, and Wath Recycling is keeping the condition of the drums under review.

On an earlier occasion, the hon. Gentleman asked me about the licensing conditions at that site. Wath Recycling is licensed to treat a long list of materials, including those that it thought it was obtaining from FMC, and to store waste. The licence condition is, in the view of the regulatory authority, adequate to cover the new safely drummed waste which Wath Recycling has and which it has mixed with other material.

As the hon. Gentleman made clear, local authority inspectors monitor the Wath site regularly under air pollution, waste treatment licensing and environmental responsibilities. Wath Recycling is able to provide them with lists of material on site. We are aware of the furnace fire in April 1991, but we were assured by HMIP that there was no danger to the drums of waste stored outside the furnace building.

Mr. Hardy: I am not denying the various points that the hon. Gentleman made, but if he had money to invest and he were looking for a place in which to invest it, would he go to the Dearne valley and invest there while that squalid and horrible dangerous mess existed?

Mr. Baldry: I was going to deal with the Dearne valley and the question whether we foresaw any changes in the law. As the hon. Gentleman asked specifically about the Dearne valley, I shall deal with that now.

I accept that the presence of the Wath Recycling site might, in his judgment, have an impact on the Dearne valley regeneration scheme, but I suspect that that impact will not be as great as he believes. I understand that the scheme includes an area known as Wath-Manvers. It comprises about 1,800 acres, including 887 acres of derelict land. Most of the land has been used by industry associated with coal mining.

Rotherham metropolitan borough council and British Coal are working together to carry forward the regeneration of the area. They engaged consultants who prepared a feasibility study and the final report of that study was made in July 1990. The regional office of the Department of the Environment has been kept fully involved in discussions on the proposals.

I accept and appreciate that the overriding aim of the strategy is to create a new image for the area through large-scale environmental improvements and through the creation of green facilities such as nature reserves, golf courses and water-related leisure facilities.

Total reclamation costs have been estimated to be about £12 million, with infrastructure costs of about £18 million. The strategy envisages a five-to-10 year development programme, with the majority of public funds being called on for the reclamation work and the infrastructure provision in the first five years.

Rotherham metropolitan borough council bid for derelict land grant funds for 1991-92 of £4·2 million for Wath-Manvers as part of the existing Dearne valley rolling programme. That includes £1·8 million of infrastructure. The council received £2·3 million. The relationship between the waste at Wath to progress on the Wath-Manvers strategy is a matter for local authority consideration in the first instance. However, I understand that it is not considered an immediate obstacle to progress on the scheme and substantial sums of money—millions of pounds—are being invested in the Dearne valley regeneration scheme. Although I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern, I do not think that that difficulty jeopardises the scheme because a considerable amount of money is being invested in it.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about changes in the law. Because of general concerns about transboundary waste, Britain has taken the lead in the European Community and in the OECD in calling for all developed countries to become self-sufficient in disposing of their own waste. We have been successful in that the principle of self-sufficiency has been incorporated in European Community legislation in the recently adopted revised framework directive. The principle is also an important part of the OECD's recommendation on the reduction of transfrontier movement of waste.

[Mr. Baldry]

Another key aspect of our policy is the ratification of the United Nations environment programme's Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal. The essence of the convention is the reduction of transboundary movements to the minimum consistent with the environmentally sound and efficient management of hazardous and domestic waste. The Government are helping to finance the convention's interim secretariat, which is developing further controls and compiling information for developing countries on waste management. We are also pressing the European Commission to bring to a successful conclusion its draft regulation, which will enable the Community and member states to ratify the convention.

The problems that the hon. Gentleman has rightly drawn to the House's attention involve a case in which a recycling contract went wrong. The material concerned is not abandoned and is, according to every regulatory authority involved, safely stored. Wath Recycling made a speedy response to the problem as soon as it became aware of it, and local authorities and Government inspectorates have worked together to ensure local safeguards.

Ministerial colleagues and others have made strenuous efforts to try to resolve the problem by negotiation and by whatever means they had at their disposal as soon as it came to light. Ultimately, we must act in accordance with the law, and I think that the future of the case depends on litigation. My Department has done what it can at this stage to ensure that that is embarked upon quickly——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 14 June 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

9.35 am

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): As the Member of Parliament for Vauxhall, I have the pleasure of having the Refugee Council in my constituency, and I want to present to the House a petition signed by just over 1,000 people to highlight the position of asylum seekers and refugees in this country. I hope that the Government will consider the petition seriously.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House requests the Government to improve as a matter of urgency the arrangements and facilities for asylum seekers and refugees.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

BREEDING OF DOGS

Mr. Alan Williams, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Ron Davies, Dame Janet Fookes, Mr. Alan W. Williams, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. John P. Smith, Mr. Terence L. Higgins and Mr. John Ward, presented a Bill to extend powers of inspection for the purposes of the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 to premises not covered by a licence under that Act: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 21 June and to be printed. [Bill 182.]

Taxation Policies

9.36 am

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I beg to move,

That this House congratulates the Government on achieving reductions in direct taxation with the consequent encouragement of initiative and enterprise; urges the Government to continue its taxation polices of proven success; and warns the British people to recognise that the Labour Party's promises of increased public spending can only be achieved by substantial increases in taxation.

This is the second time this year that your hand, Mr. Speaker, has pulled my name out of the ballot for private Members' motions, and I should not like to go any further before thanking you and my good friend Lady Luck for making that possible.

I should like to use today's debate to try, at least at the start, to draw on a broader canvas than we usually can in the House and to look at the philosophy of taxation and at how in a modern society government lifts—if that is the word—about 40 per cent. of the national income from its citizens. I should like to examine how it should do that in a way most painless for those citizens, most effective for the economy, and most in keeping with modern life.

The principles of taxation go back to its birth in the 18th century. It was Burke, in this House, who made the bedrock remark on taxation:

"To tax and to please, no more than to love and to be wise, is not given to men."

That is clearly understood on both sides of the House; and it was also clearly understood on both sides of the Atlantic. It was Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia who realised that tax would be ever with us:

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

The 18th century was the time when we moved from primitive taxation—taxes on imports and levies, which were regressive forms of taxation that discouraged trade and wealth creation—towards the first taxes on income, inheritance and capital. It is not surprising, therefore, that the lasting principles that were to be the foundation on which modern tax systems were built, not merely in Britain but in Europe and the United States, were drawn up by Adam Smith in "Wealth of Nations", published in 1776. I quote Adam Smith not as some great guru of the right who has been hijacked by that wing of politics, and not because the Conservative Benches are today populated by fellow Scots, but because, with Lord Keynes, he was the greatest economist that Britain or the world has produced.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I attended a remarkable ceremony at Greyfriars churchyard in Edinburgh to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Adam Smith's death. At a conference there, Professor Wassily Leontief and Professor Laurie Klein two of the seven Nobel prize winners in economics who were present, argued convincingly that Adam Smith could have been a socialist. Every one of the seven Nobel prize winners emphatically agreed that he would have been violently opposed to the poll tax.

Mr. Fishburn: One can do many wondrous things with history. Whatever side Adam Smith would have been on if he were alive today, we are agreed that in 1776 he was a great economist.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Linlithgow

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

(Mr. Dalyell) could and should have been a Tory, and that it would be much wiser for him not to be a socialist? Adam Smith was wise enough not to be a socialist.

Mr. Fishburn: The principles laid down by Adam Smith in "Wealth of Nations" are still followed today in taxation policy. Smith's first great rule was that any tax should be related to the ability to pay, provided that it did not become a disincentive to further work or capital accumulation. His second rule was that a tax should always be certain and clear and should never be arbitrary and changing. He said that the state should make payment as convenient as possible. Smith's fourth principle was that taxation should raise as much money as effortlessly as possible, and that collection should be as cheap and efficient as possible.

More than 200 years later, those principles still stand. In those days, only 10 per cent. of the gross national product of the United Kingdom was taken by the Government. However, at that time the economy was far less robust than it is today. About 40 per cent. of the money that the Government raised then was used to repay the national debt. Given their good housekeeping record, today's Government would look aghast at such a percentage. About 33 per cent. of the money raised 200 years ago was spent on defence.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I should like to join in this exchange between Scottish Members. What would Adam Smith have thought about Labour's policy for taxing the capital value of property?

Mr. Fishburn: I shall deal with that later. I have no doubt that any economist would find such capital taxes inefficient and socially regressive. They run counter to the rules that I have set out.

In 1776, only 27 per cent. of the income raised by Government, using far better methods of taxation than those proposed by today's Opposition, was spent for the relief of the poor. Although as a proportion of GNP the amount raised was far lower than today, the way in which it was spent towards the end of the 18th century was far less intelligent.

To those four principles upon which the Inland Revenue has been built over the past two centuries three more have been added. The first is the principle of John Locke, echoed by the French philosophers of the 18th century, that man is entitled to the fruits of his labour. That leads to the clear philosphical belief that it is a contradiction in a free society for government to take more than half the fruits of a man's labour.

The second addition is the clear principle that taxation should never be used as a tool for social engineering; but, in essence, Government spending is such a tool because its whole purpose is to redistribute wealth and to help those who are unable to help themselves. Government must also finance the defence of the realm and afford protection to the poorest in society. To design a tax specifically to achieve a social purpose is not merely economically inefficient but socially divisive, and has never been accepted by free civilised societies as a sensible way forward.

The seventh principle upon which taxation is based was abundantly clear 200 years ago but has been truly noticed only in the past 20 to 30 years. It is that, no matter how much politicians huff and puff, no country can afford to enter on its own a cul de sac of taxation quite separate from the systems of its neighbours. No open and free trading society, such as Britain, which has more than 30 per cent. of its GNP in international trade, can adopt a taxation system removed from that of its neighbours and competitors. It cannot go in a different direction from that taken by societies similar to its own.

The amount of money taken in taxation from Britain's citizens is within one percentage point of that taken from their citizens by most European countries. It is within one percentage point of the European average and, at 39 to 40 per cent., is exactly the same as the percentage in Germany, Italy and Ireland. It may be thought that taxation can be dragged in one direction or another, but no society in the west can afford to march in a direction different from that taken by history, our neighbours, friends and competitors. That has always been so.

The first death duties and capital taxes were founded between 1650 and 1680 in Britain, France and Prussia. Income tax was introduced in Britain, in three other European countries and in the United States in 18 months in 1799-80. That shows that economic ideas travel as rapidly today as they did 200 years ago.

The seven principles that I have outlined—four from Adam Smith and three that have been added to the taxation system—can be used to build a modern and effective taxation system. That is exactly what the Government have done over the past 10 years. They have stuck to all those principles; their clear policy over that time has been to move taxation away from direct tax towards taxes on spending. That reflects the growth of the consumer society, and Government policy has been to allow people to keep as much as possible of their earned income. By choosing where to spend their money, people may choose where to yield up their taxes.

The general trend so successfully set by the Government of lowering marginal rates of personal taxation and taxes on corporations so that they have more money to invest, of lowering direct and raising indirect tax, has been adopted by all our major competitors. Britain and the United States have led the way with such policies.

What it is possible to discern from Labour party policy on taxation seems to contradict not one or two of the fundamental principles but all seven. Let us consider, first, the bedrock that taxation should be built upon ability to pay without causing the disincentive of an individual to work or to form capital. The single clear policy of which the Labour party is so proud is to increase the income tax of high earners to 59 per cent.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will apply Smithsonian principles to the community charge—the poll tax—and tell us how that was linked to ability to pay or to cheap and efficient collection.

Mr. Fishburn: I am talking about primary tax. Poll tax, rates or a council tax are paid with moneys that are available after income tax has been paid. Such taxes are not primary taxation.

The one clear principle that is enunciated by those who sit on the Opposition Front Bench is that it is their intention to raise to 59 per cent. income on the high paid. That goes against the first concept that tax should be linked to ability to pay. It is worth noting that in a modern society income tax is no longer the fairest way of raising

income. That is stated clearly in a rather good pamphlet entitled "Direct and Indirect Taxation: A Socialist Approach", which was published by the Fabian Society a year or so ago. One passage in the pamphlet states:

"The idea that direct tax is more progressive than indirect tax is not true."

The Labour idea that income tax hits the rich harder than the poor is also wrong. That is because the notion that income is the only way of achieving graded taxation is out of date. As we are now a consumer society, and as the spread of wealth throughout society has taken the form that it has throughout the west, the fairest taxes that are most directly linked to ability to pay are those that are specifically consumer taxes, not general income taxes.

Were income tax to be increased for the higher paid to 59 per cent., it would take the marginal rates of tax in Britain from near the lowest that now reign in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to the highest. That is an easy and quick debating point, but it is not the whole point. We must consider the amount of money that is already taken from the highest earners. Higher taxation begins to be levied in this country when someone is earning only two and a half times average earnings. In Italy, the highest rate of tax is only 50 per cent., not 59 per cent., as proposed by the Labour party. Furthermore, someone in Italy will have to pay this highest rate only when he is earning 11 times average earnings. In France, the threshold is six and a half times average earnings. Under the Labour party's proposals, the higher paid would begin to pay 59 per cent. income tax on earnings that were a mere two and a half times more than the average. That is the principle that makes such taxation so repugnant.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the hon. Gentleman explain how he arrived at that calculation?

Mr. Fishburn: I arrived at it through the considerable work that has been done by a number of accountants. If the hon. Gentleman refers to *The Economist* of 8 June, he will find set out the work that has been done by Coopers Lybrand and Deloitte.

Mr. Brown: What the hon. Gentleman says in reply to my intervention may well reveal the source of the figures to which he treats the House. Can he quote any Opposition Front-Bench shadow Treasury source as a basis for his conclusions?

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): No such source would dare to put himself in that position.

Mr. Brown: We have never said anything of the sort.

Mr. Fishburn: I listened to last night's debate when the commitment to a 59 per cent. rate of income tax was made. It is clear that if a Labour Government were to increase child benefit rates and pensions and to respond to continuing spending pressures, they would have to increase tax revenue. Without that increase, there would not be a sufficient tax base to raise the money. Even if a Labour Government were to double the threshold—something which the Government have been unable to do over 10 years, for sound fiscal reasons—at which income tax would be paid at 59 per cent. that would still make the marginal rate of tax in Britain higher than in any other country in the OECD. That is the scandal of high direct taxation. It is not linked, necessarily, to ability to pay, and certainly not to modern work practices that seek to encourage incentive and capital formation.

Despite all that has been properly done by the Government, income tax still takes 32 per cent. of a British executive's pay. That is 32 per cent. for the Treasury from someone who is admittedly on high earnings of, say, £50,000 a year. That is already a much higher take than that which is to be found in competitor countries. The consequences of the Labour party's apparent policy would be economically horrifying and socially disastrous.

Mr. McMaster: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's calculations. He has referred to someone earning about £50,000 a year and paying 32 per cent. of his income to the Treasury in the form of income tax. Has he calculated the percentage that the senior citizen pays from his old-age pension as a result of the increases in value added tax that the Government have imposed?

Mr. Fishburn: The increases in VAT are linked to expenditure and not to income. I am talking about income. The one clear promise that we have had from the Labour party is that tax will be increased on high earners to 59 per cent. An increase from a 32 per cent. take to 59 per cent., irrespective of whether, by some miracle, thresholds were increased so that the highest rate came into operation only when someone's earnings were three or four times average earnings would result in British executives being taxed more heavily than their counterparts in the OECD by a long chalk. That cannot square with the running of an efficient, competitive or modern economy.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Does my hon. Friend agree that an intervention about the increase in VAT rates would have come rather better from a Labour Member who had voted against them? As Labour Members did not vote against the increase, such an intervention can properly be ignored.

Mr. Fishburn: I knew that I had good reason to allow my hon. Friend to intervene. I am grateful to him.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): An even better reason for ignoring such an intervention is that pensions kept ahead of increases in prices, and price increases include VAT. It was a red herring coming from red Scotland.

Mr. Fishburn: I shall move on to the second principle which Adam Smith laid down and which the Government have done well to observe. That is that when a nation is taxed the taxation should be certain and clear. The Government have succeeded in making their tax policy simple and clear since they came into office. From the very start the Government enunciated the principle that they would move from high marginal rates of taxation to lower direct rates and higher indirect taxes. They announced that they would encourage savings and link, as far as possible, capital taxes and income taxes; and that they would encourage industry by lowering corporation tax. These are clear policies which have allowed British industry and individuals over the past 10 years to plan their tax. That is why Smith was so wise to say that if one is clear and certain, the Government will be able to take their share of national income from people in a way that is most efficient and least painful.

[Mr. Fishburn]

When we consider the Labour party's spending plans, which we need to do because its taxation plans seem to be limited to the disastrous increase in income tax to 59 per cent. at the top level, we see that tax under a Labour Government would be anything but certain and clear.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does the figure of 59 per cent. include unthresholded national insurance contributions, or are they additional?

Mr. Fishburn: The figure includes national insurance contributions. To be fair and open-handed, each time I have made international comparisons, I have included the national insurance contributions in other countries. If national insurance contributions are included, the top rate in Britain would be 59 per cent. In Italy, the average tax of someone earning £50,000 a year would be 38 per cent.; in Germany it would be 30 per cent., in France it would be under 30 per cent., and in Canada, Japan and the United States it would be nearer 25 per cent. The figures for all those countries include national insurance contributions. Under the suggestions of the Labour party, the average person in Britain earning £50,000 a year would be paying 59 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but he should avoid turning his back on the Chair. It is not only a discourtesy to the Chair, but it makes things difficult for the *Hansard* reporters.

Mr. Fishburn: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was distracted.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The hon. Gentleman's figures for the top marginal rates of taxation in Italy and the other countries are wrong. If he is including social security taxes, the top marginal rate in Italy, for example, would be 63·9 per cent.

Mr. Fishburn: The hon. Gentleman is reading his own piece of paper and not listening to my argument. The figures have been calculated and apply to an executive working in Europe or in Britain who earns £50,000 a year. It is the real take that matters, because the figures take account of the thresholds at which taxes are levied. The real lift—the stealing from the pocket—would be 59 per cent. on someone earning £50,000 a year in Britain. As I made abundantly clear, it would not be anything like that in other countries.

It strikes me that the essential principle that taxation should be certain and clear is being violated by the Labour party's suggestions. They are only suggestions because the spending policies have not been spelt out; there have been promises and ideas, but they have not been costed. We must remember that every spending policy has to be matched by an increase in taxation. Even if it is matched in the short run by an increase in borrowing, that is merely deferred taxation.

The third and fourth principles outlined by Adam Smith—that payment should be as convenient as possible and that collection should be as cheap as possible—are, of course, essential to a modern tax system. The Government are much to be congratulated on increasing the efficiency of the Inland Revenue, on having brought on stream modern tax-collection methods such as computerisation, and on lessening the burden of tax collection by lessening the number of taxes to be collected. The abolition of taxes over the past 10 years—one or two in almost every Budget—has meant that the cost of collection has gone down.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that although there have been improvements in the efficiency of tax collection, there could be considerable further improvement? Does he think that we might benefit from the introduction of a self-collecting income tax system such as is used in the United States and in this country for the collection of value added tax?

Mr. Fishburn: That idea is worth pursuing. There are objections to self-assessment, and one is that it transfers the costs from the Inland Revenue to the individual. The net amount of cost is not saved. If one considers money spent on raising taxes in the United States, the country with the longest record of self-assessment, one finds that it is no less than the amount spent in Britain. The money is spent by the taxpayer rather than the state.

However, I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that the subject is worthy of debate. It should not be slapped down straight away, but should be aired. I should like to encourage the House—this is one of the purposes of the debate—to consider the ways in which an efficient tax system can be created.

Another idea that could be pushed by the Government's computerisation of the tax system is that tax returns should be increasingly filed by corporations and individuals, who so wish, by computer. There is no reason for tax returns to be bound by paper. Now that the Inland Revenue has been successfully computerised, one would like to see much more action in that direction.

The most efficient way of lowering the cost of the collection of tax is, of course, to have fewer taxes. The abolition of many taxes is enormously to the Government's credit. That is why, on the principles that payment should be as convenient as possible and collection should be as cheap as possible, one must look askance at the Labour party's suggestions and its record when it was in government. Then the Inland Revenue was bogged down terribly as it sought to digest new tax after new tax. One remembers the backlog in the income tax department of the Inland Revenue in the 1960s and the 1970s and the chaos that selective employment tax—surely one of the worst taxes on the new and burgeoning service industry—caused among tax collectors.

The logical consequence of a system of clear taxes and cheap collection is that the Government must have as few taxes as possible and that they must be as easily collectable as possible, with self-assessment, as for value added tax, and computerisation, as for income tax and corporation tax. Over the next 10 years, I hope that the Government will press on with this line of reform, because it will lighten the tax burden and spread it more evenly in our community.

Let me consider the principle enunciated by John Locke that every citizen has the right to the fruits of his labour. The top rate of tax in this country is now fixed at 40 per cent., which means that someone paying that rate is working 24 minutes in every hour for Her Majesty's Government. That is no small tax on time and effort. If that tax were raised to 59 per cent., as is proposed, it would mean that 36 minutes of an individual's hour would be

spent on Government labour. That is 12 minutes longer than is spent at present. That means that an executive working a 10-hour day and paying 59 per cent. tax would spend two more hours working for the Government. How does that square with John Locke's idea of every citizen being entitled to the fruits of his own labour?

We must remember that taxation policy takes not merely money but time from an individual. Time itself is an incentive. The Opposition's suggested increase in taxes is nothing more than an indication that under a Labour Government we would be slaves to Her Majesty's Treasury for a greater amount of the day. The time that an individual might have to create his own capital, to provide his own incentive, to take risks and to produce wealth and prosperity would be diminished by a new tax burden.

The old concept, which seemed to rule the country for so long, that held that it was somehow noble to spend public money but ignoble to produce and create private money must be reversed. The nobility, dignity and success of the nation depend not on the spending of public money, but on the creation of private wealth.

When people are subjected to a high marginal rate of tax, they work less hard and less productively. As taxes have been lowered on the top 5 per cent. of earners, the amount that they contribute to the Treasury has gone up sharply. When the top rate of tax was 83 per cent. and 98 per cent. on investment income under the previous Labour Government, and almost all of a rich man's time was enslaved to the Government, the top 5 per cent. of earners in this country contributed only 24 per cent. of income tax revenue to the Treasury. When direct taxes were lowered, people's desire to work grew rapidly. Less time was spent fiddling taxes; they were paid more willingly. As a result, the amount of money that went to the Treasury from those lower rates of taxation increased rapidly. When the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers were paying 40 per cent. only, they contributed 32 per cent. of the overall tax revenue.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Most of us now realise that the Labour party's idea of a square meal is a £500 snack in Park lane. Perhaps the Labour party should inquire from its supporters how many of its professional advisers now pay a reduced tax bill compared with when the Labour Government's taxation rates went up to 98 per cent. If the Labour party's millionaire supporters can confirm that they now pay their taxes openly when previously they found all sort of ways of legally avoiding paying them, my hon. Friend's message may be taken in by the Labour party.

The Labour party should also consider that it cannot run its show on £500 meal tickets. It must get contributions from the great raft of ordinary people who support it. The same principle applies if the Opposition increase taxation in order to increase spending.

Mr. Fishburn: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am sure that his point will be taken. The wealthy supporters of the Labour party—good luck to it that it should have them—will be less wealthy should it succeed in its intention to form the next Government.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: My hon. Friend mentioned the top rate of tax of 98 per cent. on income as set so short a time ago under the Labour Government. I remember returning to the Palace with the late Lord Arran in a taxi. He gave the taxi driver a 10p piece and said, "There's a fiver for you, cabbie." The taxi driver said, "No, no, that is only a 10p piece. What do you mean?" Lord Arran replied, "Yes, but I had to earn a fiver to give it to you."

Mr. Fishburn: The result is that Lord Arran probably earned fewer fivers and probably took fewer taxis. It is notable that the lower the rate of marginal taxation, the greater the contribution an individual makes to the national treasury. I am not suggesting that that is of itself a good idea, for we should not make the mistake of equating high revenue to the Treasury with successful policy. Successful policy means high revenue to individuals and relatively low revenue needed by the Treasury.

If we accept the notion that in a modern western society approximately 40 per cent. of national income needs to go to Government for Government expenditure, for heaven's sake we should look through the clear lens of economic efficiency, not through that of the politics of envy and the dogmatism of socialism, to discover how to raise that money from the unsuspecting public.

Western society has now concluded that taxes of more than 50 per cent. are morally repugnant and old fashioned. To take more than half of the fruits of man's labour is no longer acceptable practice. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury may cite two or three European countries where the marginal rate of taxation is theoretically more than 50 per cent., but, in reality, no European country takes more than half of the fruits of a man's labour in direct income tax.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Would the hon. Gentleman go as far as to support the view that, if a person rents a house privately to another individual and demands more than half of his income in rent, that is unjust? Surely the landlord is asking more in rent than that person can earn. Would the hon. Gentleman apply the same principle to prices as he does to taxation? If prices are too high, people cannot earn enough to pay them.

Mr. Fishburn: I am not sure that I understand the question. We are talking about whether a Government have the moral right to take more than half of the fruits of a man's labour. It is an entirely different matter if people agree to such lunacy in a private contract.

I did not expect the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) to catch the point. We are talking about whether the Government of the people have a right to take mandatorily more than half the fruits of a man's labour. I doubt whether a Government with good sense would pursue such a policy. In the old days, the Labour party found that notion repugnant, as did 18th century progressive thinkers such as Locke and Hume.

Whenever taxes are raised, it must be done in the most efficient way. To tax with the idea of forming such-and-such a pattern of society is wrong. To spend with the idea of forming such-and-such a pattern in society is entirely justifiable. To spend is the way to produce the society desired. Raising the necessary revenue for that, however, must be done in a way that is blind to the social engineering costs. It must be done in the most productive and efficient way.

That principle has been widely understood for the past two centuries in western society. The redistribution of income is achieved through Government spending, not through the revenues that they raise. That was not understood by the previous Labour Government, and that is one reason why the country went downhill rapidly and

[Mr. Fishburn]

became bankrupt. The last time we had a Chancellor of the Exchequer from a Labour Administration it was his avowed policy to squeeze the rich "until the pips squeak". It was not his avowed policy to raise money from the rich in the most efficient manner, to maximise the nation's income. That would have been entirely understandable. Instead, his idea was to tax the rich until the pips squeaked. His policy was one not of economic efficiency but of social engineering—not one that would increase the revenue that could be spent on the poor, but one that would discourage those people who helped to create wealth. They are perhaps a small section of society, but to the right hon. Gentleman they were nothing less than the enemies of the people.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, following Labour's policy review, the policies that he describes are nothing like those of today's Labour party?

Mr. Fishburn: I am a great follower of U-turns. It is extraordinary how two U-turns make a straight line. Labour has made so many U-turns that it is hard to say where it is at the moment.

It is possible so to tax a society that the social benefits of fairly-spread taxation benefit it. One of the most socially progressive and welcome moves of the past 10 years has been to give women control over their own tax affairs. That reform was introduced by my right hon. Friend the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), and will stand as his most lasting contribution to this country's tax reform. That measure, while not seeking to change the nature of society by tax policy, recognised the changing nature of society. I hope that the Government are even now considering other ways in which tax raising can fairly reflect the way in which British society is developing.

The politics of envy and social engineering, which seek to use tax to exploit one group of people at the expense of another, is not the right way forward, but methods that recognise modern work practices, the part that women play in society, on the role of those who are past the age of retirement but want to remain economically active, should be taken on board in our tax philosophy. This should alter to reflect the changing nature of modern life.

When we make international comparisons, we bump into something that politicians do not like very much—absolute reality. Earlier I said that even in the 17th century tax methods in western Europe were almost identical. If a tax was introduced by the Stuart court, it was only a matter of years before it was adopted by the Hanover, Prussian and French courts. Tax is an international phenomenon.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the hon. Gentleman says more about international considerations, will he reflect on the fact that near his own constituency—in fact, in his constituency—there is to be found the Natural History museum, in south Kensington? Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the international outrage felt by those concerned with taxonomy and the basic data of science that this country does not seem to have the money to keep going the internationally famous institution that is to be found in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency?

Mr. Fishburn: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest in the Natural History museum, and have heard him speak on that subject in Adjournment debates. I may point out that the Natural History museum is not, alas, in my constituency. I have to put up with the House of Commons as an example of fine Victorian architecture. In any event, the hon. Gentleman refers to spending, and not to tax raising.

I was making the point that western societies have precisely the same needs for raising tax. If one looks at the chart produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, one sees that over the past 10 years countries overseas have marched hand-in-hand in their requirements for the amount of tax that they need to take from national income. In all European countries, that amount has increased year by year. The percentage of the national income taken in 1979 was about 35 per cent. in the United Kingdom, and today it is nearly 40 per cent. The same is true of the country whose economy is nearest in size to our own—Italy. In 1979, it took 29 per cent. of its national income in taxation; today it takes the same as we do.

That reality points a mocking hand at both sides of the House. Over the past 10 years, the Government have done much huffing and puffing over how they have cut this and that and are spending less—yet the figures show that public expenditure accounts for an increased share of national income. One wonders why the Government allowed themselves to be so regularly hit over the head when they were saying that this and that was being cut when—despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about the Natural History museum—the amount of national income being taken and spent, even during years of great economic growth, rose remorselessly year after year.

Is it the Government who should feel ashamed of themselves or the Opposition who, year after year, led attack after attack suggesting that services should be cut or not enough money was being provided in Government expenditure? If the Opposition were to examine the figures, they would know very well the clear, simple and published truth that more money, and a higher percentage of the national income, was spent year after year. All the arguments in this Chamber and elsewhere in the country to the effect that the Government were cutting back and not spending enough were wholly bogus. The reality was that a higher share of national income was being spent each year. One questions whether it is the intention of the Government—or would be the intention of a Labour Government—to increase the share of national income still further. Unless that question is answered clearly, all the rest is so much political garbage. If it is true that we will hold on to taking just 40 per cent. of national income for public expenditure, we must stay with the same patterns and amounts of expenditure.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The House knows that there are some questions that the Labour party answers with a 200-word sentence, and others to which it gives answers running to four pages of transcript in Walden-type interviews. My hon. Friend asked whether it is Labour's intention to increase the percentage of national income taken in tax. The answer must be yes, no, or that Labour has not thought about it. Can my hon. Friend encourage the Opposition to give a clear answer today, because it must be one of those three?

Mr. Fishburn: I am sure that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) will at least attempt to give a clear answer. He may find himself in some difficulty, because he must recognise that the amount of money available for public expenditure is directly related to any growth in the economy, and that only if the economy grows will it be possible to increase expenditure, or to hold it at 40 per cent. of national income. That would be one possible and honest answer.

Alternatively, the hon. Gentleman will have to admit that Labour, having examined its expenditure plans, has decided, if not to make a dash for growth, to make a dash for expenditure. He would need to acknowledge that, while all other European countries are converging on a 40 per cent. share of national income, Britain under a Labour Government—at a time when it is emerging from a recession—would be seeking to pursue a unilateral policy of increasing the share of the national income taken by the Government from the European average of 40 per cent. to 45, 46, 47, 48 or 49 per cent.—perhaps the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will tell us.

I can say categorically that if the hon. Gentleman accepts the second argument, that would be an economic disaster for this country as it enters the 21st century. If he accepts the first argument, it follows as night follows day that all the blarney that we hear in the House about how much a Labour Government would spend on public services is nonsense and as dust before the wind. In the end, we will have to spend the same amount of national income.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend consider that the proposed national investment plan, for which industry will have to pay, and the proposed training tax, which is the selective employment tax in wolves' clothing, would affect the dash for growth?

Mr. Fishburn: There would be a dash, but it would be a dash into foreign investment and away from further capital creation in Britain. It would not be a dash for growth in the circumstances that my hon. and learned Friend depicts. It would be a dash to the past and, I am afraid to say, to a rapid contraction of our economy.

The Government's taxation policies in the past 10 years have followed the seven principles on which tax raising has been founded in all west European countries in the past two centuries. Their policy was clear from the start. They have lowered direct taxation and increased indirect taxation. Greater individual freedom has been given; the individual can choose where he yields up his taxes. It may be on his habit of cigarette smoking, or on his car by paying more in petrol tax. It will be on this, that or the other item; as he spends, he will pay tax. That is a fair and modern way of raising revenue.

Because of the diminution of marginal rates of taxation, people who earn more are now making a greater contribution to Treasury funds. The Government have put into practice a major principle enunciated by Adam Smith: tax must be related to the ability to pay.

The Opposition are muddled. They have proposed nothing that counts as a clear policy, and have not said whether their spending policies would increase or maintain the share of national income taken by government. I hope that the Government, when they are returned to office after the next general election, will continue with their clear policies and will hold—in time, I hope, diminish—the amount of national income taken from the taxpayer.

10.33 am

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We are increasingly aware of what could be described as anti-tax language. It is not confined to Conservative Benches; it is used widely in society. People believe that taxes are an unjust confiscation of a citizen's deserved earnings and that the purchase of goods and services from the private sector is an exercise of individual freedom. Phrases such as "consumer sovereignty" are used. That reinforces the myth that the consumer is all-powerful. However, it rings hollow in the ears of millions of people who cannot exercise choice because their incomes are too low.

Government figures show that poverty is increasing. The view that we are all consumers neglects to take account of the fact that we are also citizens.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman define the term "poverty" as he just used it?

Mr. Battle: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Library where he can look at the latest Government figures on households on low incomes. They make it plain that people on benefit are living in poverty and many people who are not on benefit are living below the poverty line. We regularly debate that subject in the House. The Government try to hide behind statistics. They have redefined the terms on which a person is considered to be unemployed and denied benefit to 17-year-olds.

I am sure that you will rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I continue on that subject. If the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) does not believe that there is poverty in Britain because he cannot agree on a definition, he should test his eyes and ears by talking to his constituents who are struggling to live on unemployment benefit. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will remind me how much that benefit is. It is £41·40 a week. That is much less than the amount that Conservative Members earn.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Battle: Not at the moment. I shall develop my argument, and then I shall graciously give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Are Conservative Members still expressing the view that taxes are a moral evil and, at best, a burden begrudgingly paid? During the election campaign in America, a pro-Bush car sticker read "Every man is born free and taxed to death"—notably it referred only to men. I was interested in some of the annual reports of the charities, such as the Convert Aid Society. Its report contained sentiments that were typical. It stated:

> "Inheritance tax now takes a substantial toll even from quite modest estates—if you own your own house it is unlikely that your heirs will escape.
>
> However, since bequests to charities are exempt from tax, the question you might wish to ask is whether you would prefer merely to enrich the Exchequer or help give a home."

The Exchequer is seen as a malign, imperial figure—*[Interruption.]* We are hearing echoes of that from the Conservative Benches. Contributing anything in taxes is considered a moral evil.

[Mr. Battle]

I recently read the illuminating book by Nigel Tutt "The History of Tax Avoidance". It is interesting to look at all the guides to tax avoidance that are to be found on bookshop shelves. They reinforce the impression in my mind that tax legislation is a vast playground for special interests that plead for exemptions and use loopholes to get people with some pull off the hook. That is also the impression given by some of the Conservative amendments to the present Finance Bill.

The common view outside the House is that tax is a tedious, mysterious world of codes and numbers, and is a matter for experts. I agree with the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) that taxation is central to government. Sabine's "A Short History of Taxation" makes it clear that we can have taxation without government, but we cannot have government without taxation. Taxation is part of the contract of civilisation. It is part of the social, economic and political development of society.

The question is not whether taxes should be raised at all, despite the slogans of the new right or the recent north American, so-called "Tax Freedom Days", which present the view that paying taxes is like throwing money away. They reinforce the view that the public sector is a burden on citizens and limits their freedoms. Attacks on taxation in principle are thinly disguised attempts to soften the public to attacks on the public sector. That is the agenda. There is an attempt to deny the fact that any public sector activity provides crucial and vital services that benefit the whole of society. In a democracy, we can collectively agree to raise funds by taxation to a common Treasury for those activities. I fail to understand how reducing services enhances individual freedom.

I remember when proposition 19 was introduced in California. The fire service was privatised and people were told that, through the insurance policy on their house, they were contracted out to an individual fire service. It seemed to work for a while, but when a home in Beverly Hills was burned down—thankfully, no one was injured—and the owners thought that they would claim back on the insurance to rebuild the property, they were told that they could not do that because the contract had been with a fire service whose engine had been out elsewhere that night, so the cover was broken. They did not get their money back. Within months, a public fire service was reintroduced in California and taxes were increased to put on the road fire engines to which the whole community had access. Why do we need to go around the wheel of reinventing public services by privatising them, only to discover that they need to be brought back into public ownership so that the community does not suffer—for example, by catching typhoid if there are no public health facilities?

Conservative Members agree, because in practice they are not opposed to taxes. The Conservative party pretends that it is not taking money through taxes. In yesterday's debate, a Conservative Member referred to the Government's slashing of taxes. It would be more honest if Conservative Members spelt out the truth under the Government—taxes have increased from 34·75 per cent. in 1978-79 to 37·75 per cent. this financial year. The Government are taking more taxes from the British people. The Government may say that they have switched to indirect taxation. What did they do when they needed money to make good the damage of poll tax? They switched to indirect taxation and shoved up VAT to 17·5 per cent. The Government have massively increased indirect taxation.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Did the hon. Gentleman vote against that?

Mr. Battle: Conservative Members can hardly ask how we voted on the poll tax. We voted 170 times against the poll tax, whereas Conservative Members voted for it on practically every possible occasion. They now have the nerve to tell the country that they are against the poll tax, that they have dropped it and are now introducing something else—so much for all their talk of principles when it was introduced. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said in an intervention, we were told that ability to pay was no longer relevant. Because the Government imposed such a burden on people, the only way out was to increase VAT and to tell people that they would get £140 back. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) may like to explain why many people have not received that money back. As the Secretary of State for the Environment revealed, the £140 was a headline figure. It was not money in pockets. People at the bottom of the scale did not get their £140 back. That is typical.

The anti-tax campaign has been a cover story, because the key aim has been to discredit progressive taxation. The aim has been to undermine the idea that the rich should pay a larger proportion of income than the poor. The 1980s were the decade of the yuppie, of quick fortunes on the futures market and of overnight killings on real estate and property development. They will not be remembered for consideration or for any caring for the poor. They will go down as the "loadsamoney" decade and as the age of record sales in Christie's and Sotheby's.

The hon. Member for Kensington referred to Adam Smith, but I was surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not quote the writings in which Smith said that the tax system should overcome some of the inequalities in wealth and income. Adam Smith argued for a progressive taxation policy and said:

"It must always be remembered that it is the luxurious and not the necessary expense of the inferior ranks of people that ought to be taxed."

Selective quotations by Conservative Members will not lead in a helpful direction.

Adam Smith's principles have not been followed. Under the Government, tax reform has always meant lighter taxes for the wealthy and a financial squeeze on everyone else. Mr. John Hill, in "Changing Tax"—which I recommend to hon. Members—spells out what happened since 1979 in tax and benefit changes. He says:

"Remarkably what has happened has been a virtual zero net cost reform. The cuts in direct taxes have been entirely paid for by cuts in the generosity of benefits. There has indeed been a major redistribution from those on low incomes to the better off. Overall, the bottom 60 per cent. of the income distribution has lost, while the top 30 per cent., especially the top 10 per cent., has gained. The losses for the bottom 50 per cent. average out at nearly £8·50 per family—a substantial proportion of their net incomes—while the top 10 per cent. have gained nearly £40 per family. Overall, the bottom half of the population has lost £6·6 billion of which £5·6 billion has gone to the top 10 per cent., and indeed £4·8 billion has gone to the top 5 per cent."

The tax-cutting 1988 Budget reduced the taxation rate for top earners from 83 to 40 per cent. The take from capital

gains, inheritance and capital taxes has decreased. There has been a redistribution of wealth, but it has been from the poorest to the richest.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman accept the principle that the objective of taxation is to raise money to meet the Government's expenditure programme and, therefore, a change to a lower tax rate produces a larger gain from those on higher incomes than occurred at a higher tax rate? Surely that achieves exactly what the Government want. Did not that happen with the reduction down to 40 per cent?

Mr. Battle: If that were true, I should be interested in the argument, but the rules have favoured the rich. I shall come to the precise details of how that works in practice when I examine the salaries of the top earners. They found that their tax payments were massively reduced. Therefore, they are now putting in for massive pay increases because they can benefit from low taxation.

By 1980, 86 countries had substantially reduced their tax rates. I was interested in the remarks of the hon. Member for Kensington about the tide of history. Was it Fukuyama who decided to announce the end of history? Perhaps it is the end of economic history and the hon. Gentleman believes that we can go in no other direction. In Bolivia, 75 per cent. of income tax is collected from labour; only 20 per cent. is collected from capital. Has that resulted in a reduction in poverty? No; it has resulted in a massive increase. What has been the result of the Government's policies here? There has been an increase in poverty, and people in poverty have been watching the highest earners increase their rewards.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am listening with increasing incredulity to the hon. Gentleman. That he should rely on the Bolivian tax system to tell us how to operate is extraordinary. He said that we reduced the top rate of income from 83 per cent. in the 1988 Finance Bill. Would he care to confirm that it had been reduced from that rate long before?

Mr. Battle: I am pleased to accept the hon. Gentleman's correction. The rate was reduced between 1979 and 1988. Let us make no bones about it—the Government reduced the top rate to that level.

Conservative Members challenge me about the figures. In the Conservatives' campaign guide, which I suppose is given to all Conservative Members and to prospective candidates, they say:

> "The Government's consistent aim has been to bring down the tax burden when it is prudent to do so . . . Progress has been considerable. The tax burden as a proportion of national income or Gross Domestic Product, has fallen steadily from its peak in 1981-82."

On the very next page of the same campaign document, there is a table which clearly shows that tax, measured as a proportion of national income, has increased from 34·75 per cent. in 1978-79 to 37·75 per cent. in 1991. Not that I expect clear statements from Conservative Members when we heard the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on the "Today Programme" come out with the remark:

> "We cut income tax, we cut tax rates overall—it's the burden of taxation—because we have run honest public finances."

I am tempted to add that it depends what one means by the word "honest". It seems that the Chief Secretary was being economical with the language because, according to the latest figures produced by the Central Statistical Office in March this year, between 1979 and 1988 the burden of taxation increased for people on middle and low incomes, while it decreased only for those at the top. In 1979, taxes as a percentage of gross income for the bottom fifth of households, ranked by incomes, were 30·5 per cent. and in 1988 they were 39·7 per cent.; taxes for the middle fifth were 37·6 per cent. in 1979 and 39·2 per cent. in 1988; and, for the top fifth, taxes were 37·6 per cent. in 1979 and 34·5 per cent. in 1988. The poorest have paid more, because their tax burden has increased by 9·2 per cent., while those on top incomes have enjoyed a decrease of 3·1 per cent. of the taxes that they pay.

When we hear about salary increases for top earners, we should be aware that the top executives of the largest companies are given pay rises that are running at 19 per cent.—twice the rate of inflation and the growth in average earnings—yet at the same time the very same people are urging their work forces to accept modest wage rises in the national interest or even pay freezes. In one case, in Lee's, they are asking the work force to take a 7·5 per cent. wage cut, which the work force accepted on behalf of the company. When one man is paid £4,194 a day and has just taken a 17 per cent. rise, despite a fall in his company's earnings, it rings hollow to be told that he needs to be left out of taxation as an incentive.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East asked me for a definition of poverty. I offer him a definition of the word "rich". In our society being rich has come to mean being hard to tax and being able to employ armies of highly paid accountants and tax lawyers, who themselves make a handsome living by working out ingenious ways to beat the system to ensure that they keep all their income.

When Conservative Members refer to Labour's tax policy for fair taxes and before we get the lurid headlines in the tabloid press—as we always do—saying that Labour intends to tax everyone off the face of the earth, it is worth reflecting on and answering the question, "Why should hon. Members not pay a little more tax on their basic salaries to ensure that funds are available for pensioners, for the unemployed, for the health service, for those needing income support, for the schools system, housing, transport and environmental protection?" There has to be some redistribution of income in our society. We cannot allow the maldistribution that has gone on under the Conservatives to continue.

Mr. Paice: I am fascinated to hear the hon. Gentleman say that he thinks that people on the salaries of Members of Parliament should pay more tax. However, I find it difficult to relate that to the Labour party's position on child benefit in the past few years—the hon. Gentleman said that it should be universally increased. However well off one is, one's benefit would thus be increased and it seems odd that he is saying that the wealthy should pay more tax but on the other hand should receive more benefits.

Mr. Battle: If the hon. Gentleman is opening the debate to include child benefit, I am more than happy to enter into the argument. He will remember that child benefit was a part of the income tax system as family allowance and was deliberately taken out and made into a non-means-tested benefit. It was shifted from the earnings of the adult parent as it was for the cost of bringing up children, to ensure that

[Mr. Battle]

it reached children—the child benefit book is in the mother's name. There was a switch in the system and there is no inconsistency in that.

Some Conservative Members would like child benefit to be taxed and if that is the case those hon. Members should stand up and argue it in the House. Some of us would then have an argument about that. However, the hon. Gentleman is hardly in a strong position, because child benefit has been frozen by the Government. There was a little release this year in the Budget, but for years the value of child benefit was frozen. Its value has yet to catch up with its 1979 value in real terms. The Government have cut child benefit and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of all the rows in the House and outside about the iniquities of that sort of policy.

I recommend a book by the Bishop of Manchester called "Taxes, Burden or Blessing" in which he argues:

"Every decision about taxes involves important moral considerations about justice and economic well-being for all and not simply the majority."

He argues that taxes offer an opportunity to bring society into a vision of justice, equality and participation by all and he calls for a

"radical change in our attitudes towards what we do in common and how we pay for it."

I disagree with the hon. Member for Kensington as I do not think that we can separate the distribution of services from the purposes of raising the money in the first place. People want to know what their taxes are spent on. That is why when asked questions in opinion polls some people —in the most recent polls it is now a majority—say that they would be prepared to pay a bit more tax according to their means so that, for example, the health service can be properly funded.

Democracy is about people having a role in determining the level of taxation and the distribution of taxes and not simply being consumers. A Government who are the real friend of the taxpayer take their trust and understanding with them and the consent to use the money collected wisely on behalf of the whole community according to principles of distributive justice and the common good.

If we want society to be rather more than a mere collection of individuals, we must tackle the common needs and problems of society. That means tackling environmental issues and also poverty, housing, education and health in our society. Our proposals for a fairer distribution of tax and a fairer taxation system—that is all that we are asking—are essential, because they will bring the rich and the poor into a closer relationship. Because people understand that and do not want further divisions in society, with the rich getting infinitely richer and the poor getting poorer, they will vote for our fair and just taxation policies at the next election and there will be a Labour Government to implement them.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is nearly 11 o'clock and, not wishing to interrupt a parliamentary colleague's speech, may I ask whether there has been any request from the Government for a statement on the serious situation relating to intact Iraqi nuclear weapons which may be stored near the Turkish border and the issue of monitoring the nuclear centre at Tuweitha? In the light of Christopher Gunness's report, which was the second item on the news at 6 and 7 o'clock this morning on BBC radio, perhaps the Government would like to make a statement and to clarify what action they will take through the United Nations on reports which, if true, represent an appalling situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not received any requests for permission to make a statement. Doubtless what the hon. Gentleman has said will be conveyed to the appropriate Minister.

Mr. Arbuthnot: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As it is nearly 11 o'clock, may I say that I understand that today, at about 11.30, the retail prices index figures are due to be published. I wonder whether I could ask the Minister to refer in his speech to the retail prices index figures, because we never hear enough about them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, that is not a matter for me. I am sure that the Minister's speech will be in order when he makes it, if he catches my eye.

11 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The debate reveals the deep and unbridgeable divisions between Conservative and socialist philosophy. Conservatives stand for freedom of the individual, the family, the community and the country. Labour stands for statism, centralism and patronage, representing a corrupt and discredited political modus vivendi, more appropriate to the South American mafia than to the proud and distinguished country which is the United Kingdom.

It is unusual to have the chance to discuss the distributive nature of modern Governments. The distributive nature of modern Government expenditure is seldom questioned. Therefore it is to the credit of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), who initiated this private Member's debate, that we have this chance to debate that subject. I warmly congratulate him on his thoughtful and interesting speech, which outlined points that many of us do not have much chance to consider politically during the rough and tumble of our normal debates. This is a very unusual opportunity which I warmly welcome.

The fundamental difference between the Conservative and Labour parties is that while socialist dogma dictates that everyone's earnings belong to the state, Conservatives know that they belong to the individual who then freely, and with no guilt, gives back to the state—to the Treasury —a proportion of his or her income to carry out programmes that that individual supports or which, in a democracy, the majority of voters have said that they support.

Furthermore, it is clear that the individual voter wishes the Government to achieve on his or her behalf the least taxation for the maximum effect on those packages of expenditure in public life that have been deemed to be more effectively and more economically carried out by the public purse. It is seldom questioned in our society, but I believe it to be true that it is not the amount that we raise that we should question so much as the way in which we spend it. In many senses, it is not a question whether the Government raise 39, 40 or 41 per cent. in taxes. I wish it to be very much less than that. It is a question of how economically and effectively the Government use the funds that they have raised. The key question should always be: will that package of work be more effectively carried out

if it is not undertaken by the Government? When we look at the redistributive nature of our modern taxation system and Government expenditure today, again it is true to say that, in contrast to the Opposition, Conservatives want everyone to earn a handsome living. That phrase was used a moment ago in a wholly derogatory sense.

Child benefit is a universal benefit, and——

Mr. Dalyell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Nicholson: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to complete my sentence. Child benefit is a universal benefit, and it is our desire that state taxation systems should help the poorest of the poor. Universal benefits do just the reverse. That is the great weakness of universal benefits, if we want to help the poorest members of society. Universal benefits spread exactly the same sum of money throughout the whole of society.

Mr. Dalyell: Before we leave the question of what is or is not handsome, was the hon. Lady pleased and flattered by the statement that she was the only Conservative lady Member of Parliament who dresses as well as the Labour lady Members of Parliament? Would she not be better, given her opinions this morning, to stick to dress rather than politics?

Miss Nicholson: As I am not sexist, I would not wish to criticise Opposition Members for their looks or demeanour, or for their discourteous behaviour. However, Conservative Members know that Labour men as well as Labour women Members of Parliament have been Folletted. They were taken out because they were deemed to be so unattractive by members of their own party. It is not Conservatives who make sexist and rather dreary judgments of Labour men and women Members of Parliament. It was a leading member of the Labour party who said that, alas, they were so unpalatable that they had to be dressed up—that they had to be cosmetically altered from top to bottom.

I prefer the reality of a Labour Back-Bench Member. A colleague who sits in front of him saw that the television cameras were shining too brightly upon his bald pate, so the balding Member went out and bought a wig. A colleague who sits behind him was heard to refer to the dead rat that he now has to look at, sitting on the Bench in front of him. Conservatives believe in the diversity of human nature and, therefore, of human appearance, so we do not fuss in any way about what we look like.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is an Old Etonian. They are well known for their great desire to look lovely all the time. I did not read the newspaper comment to which he referred. In any case, I have no interest in such things. I am a genuine politician. I am here for the good of my constituents. I am not here for this intolerable frivolity. I shall not give way to someone who, since he happens to be a Labour Member of Parliament, is sexist, dull, drab and badly dressed.

Socialist dogma—the belief that everyone's earnings belong to the state—fails to recall the lessons learnt in eastern Europe, which is that me and mine is more productive than us and ours. It is the Folletting effect—pulling all the dress money for those who sit on the Opposition Benches into the centre—that has given us this uniformity of padded shoulders and carefully contrived colour schemes. This is a job-lot purchase from the old-style state stores in Russia—soon to be privatised, I am delighted to say. Conservatives, however, believe in people being able to purchase exactly what they want.

More seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, me and mine is more productive than us and ours. That is why, when we look at the Labour legacy of taxation that we inherited in 1979, we see that, due to Labour's desire to take more control at the centre and to depress the individual's unique contribution to his or her life and to that of the community, the basic rate of income tax was increased from 30p to 35p in the pound, giving the United Kingdom the highest rate of income tax of any Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country, except Denmark. Personal allowances ceased to be index linked, with the result that more people paid tax and more people paid income tax at the higher rate than ever before.

By 1978-79, 1·8 million more people were paying income tax than in 1973-74. The starting points for higher tax rates and investment income surcharges were reduced and halved respectively. The top rate of tax on earned income was raised from 75 to 83 per cent., and the top rate on investment income increased from 90 to 98 per cent. It was a third-world taxation approach, surprisingly reminiscent of India's.

Despite Labour's fine talk about equal opportunities for women, the previous Labour Government did not reform taxation policies for married women. Despite their hurling charges against the Conservative Government, they did not care about women. Successive Conservative Chancellors made the major reforms to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington referred.

The Conservative women's national committee made the first move while the Labour Government were in power in the late 1970s. Joan Seccombe, who subsequently became a Dame and member of the House of Lords and who is now Conservative party vice-chairman with special responsibility for women, worked hard with national committee members such as Dame Margaret Fry and others to produce a keynote report proposing that when the Conservative party took office, which they so rightly foresaw, it should alter taxation policies for married women.

That tax reform had been overdue since Julius Caesar arrived in the United Kingdom. It is curious that when he wrote about the United Kingdom he said that Britain was not only a grey and rainy island but that we were the oddest nation because we were unique in treating men and women equally in law. It took a Roman invasion to destroy that fine principle and a Conservative Government to put it right.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Miss Nicholson: The hon. Gentleman has had his chance; I shall not give way to him.

Before the Married Women's Property Act 1851, taxation was relatively light and married women were not people in law. The same applied under the Labour Government, who did not alter taxation for married women. That Act allowed married women to own property and to inherit.

Previously, the only married women who had that right were rich city widows. No doubt Old Etonians from the Labour party would have been trawling the city in the last century to find rich city widows. They were rich because they were the only married women who were allowed to

[Miss Nicholson]

inherit property. That is why they are identified so finely in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales". Even then, those widows had toy boys because they were able to inherit money. The 1851 Act corrected that, but it did not allow for independent taxation of women; it took a Conservative Government to do that.

Why did Labour make no changes? Presumably, because it costs money and the Labour party sacrifices any principle if it demands real financial commitment. That is a political prostitute's attitude—it cost money, so married women were not allowed independent taxation. Labour did not really care. I say that with some feeling, because when my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the then Chancellor, announced his momentous reform, the shadow Chancellor did not even refer to it. What a shoddy crowd the Opposition are; they really did not care.

I contrast that with the tax reforms of the Conservative Government, which were made because they are central to the Conservative philosophy and because we practise what we preach. Our goals were to reduce the basic rate of income tax, which we have done and will continue to do, from 33 to 25 per cent., with an achievable goal of 20 per cent. Another goal was to raise the thresholds at which tax become payable, which we have done, taking 2 million people out of the income tax system. We planned to switch from tax on earnings to tax on spending, which we have done with value added tax.

Before the Opposition bestir themselves from their political slumbers and complain about value added tax, I remind them that we have the second lowest VAT average in the European Community. VAT here ranges from zero to 33 per cent. That is an incredibly wide tax range and no harmonisation is planned or possible because of that broad band. We have an average outturn of just over 11 per cent. That fine track record was achieved because 25 per cent. of all goods are zero rated.

We have encouraged savings through devices such as the tax-exempt special savings account, which was introduced by the present Prime Minister. We have simplified the tax system by abolishing seven major taxes —national insurance surcharge, investment income surcharge, capital duty, capital transfer tax, development plan tax, composite rate tax on savings and stamp duty charges on shares and on property outside London. In addition, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said, we have carried out a massive computerisation programme of the Inland Revenue. It is one of the finest large computer systems in Europe and it will prove powerful and effective.

The Labour party has not admitted that it wants to bastardise the tax system by a mismatch that is alien to our political philosophies in the United Kingdom of putting together tax and benefits and by compiling a huge detailed record on each citizen in the United Kingdom to achieve what could only be a grotesquely unfair rates system.

We have helped business considerably by restructuring business taxation so that the new main corporation tax of 33 per cent. is one of the lowest in the industrialised world. We have reduced the small companies rate from 42 to 25 per cent. and brought it into line with the basic rate of income tax.

I have some points to make on which I should be glad of clarification from my hon. Friend the Minister. The first is the question of advance corporation tax, which is paid by companies on their dividends and shareholders. It appears that companies investing abroad are penalised because when they distribute in the United Kingdom the overseas income generated, little or no relief is available for the advance corporation tax payer. Secondly, over the years, that causes severe cash flow penalties, compared with companies that are wholly or mainly investing in the United Kingdom. Thirdly, that depresses the market capitalisation, because lower earnings are reported where advance corporation tax is charged—against profit rather than against tax payable or profits earned in the United Kingdom. Thus, the market capitalisation is depressed.

Secondly, perhaps the Minister will comment on the issue of benefits in kind, with particular reference to company cars. After all, scale benefits are being increased dramatically to discourage the provision of company cars. Following that, it seems that there may be an inconsistency of approach by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise in taxing the benefits where cash alternatives to the provision of cars are not proposed by companies.

Thirdly, on foreign exchange gains and losses, current taxing legislation is unclear and uncertain, leading to potential muddle. Little progress seems to be happening on that front, despite the recently issued consultative document. I should welcome the Minister's comments on those three points.

I warmly welcome the greatly enlarged tax incentives for charitable giving. I have had the good fortune to be closely involved for many years with non-governmental organisations in the United Kingdom and overseas. Indeed, for 11 years I was a staff member of the Save the Children Fund. Following that, I have been concerned with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme and others. Now that I am in Parliament, I have the opportunity as a volunteer to be heavily, and I hope constructively, involved in the workings of about 58 voluntary organisations carrying out crucial work in the United Kingdom and overseas.

All the institutions and groups with which I am concerned warmly welcome the splendid inititives that the present and previous Conservative Governments have taken in the last decade in easing giving to charity from tax perspectives. That has made an enormous difference to their income and we hope that further incentives will be forthcoming from the Government.

Overall, the Government's aim is to reduce the tax burden when it is prudent to do so, and in particular to reduce the basic rate of income tax. Much progress has been made, which I warmly welcome, and I am grateful to the Government for the fact that the tax burden as a percentage of gross domestic product has fallen throughout our period in office.

11.22 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on choosing this interesting and tricky subject for debate. It has been an illuminating debate so far.

The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) raised the important issue of the taxation of married women. I agreed with the thrust of her remarks,

possibly apart from her implication that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) might be regarded as a toy boy. She may agree that there is also cause for concern about the position of unmarried women, many of whom, rightly or wrongly, live as part of a couple. It is important to pay close attention—not only in relation to taxation but in other respects—to their legal position vis-a-vis their partners and the state.

The hon. Lady referred to charities, and I join her in welcoming the changes that the Government have made which are of benefit to charities. I hope that, with her great and respected experience of working in the charitable sector, she agrees that charities continue to labour under an archaic legal framework and that it is to be hoped that in the next Session of Parliament the Government will grasp the nettle, for which, unfortunately, they were not able to find time in this Session, for a wholesale review of charity law.

I raised that issue earlier in the week in Committee upstairs on the Finance Bill. Charities will not be able to operate in a sufficiently clear and predictable environment unless charity law is reformed and we are able to look at charities throughout the statutory framework in a modern context.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I am not sure whether toy boys must have slightly slenderer waists than the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I am not being discourteous to him when I say that I prefer him as a non-toy boy.

I welcome the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) about charities. The purpose of revising charity law should primarily be to stop the public being ripped off by so-called charities which are not charities. I see that as the key initiative. Proper charities which wish not to fall into that trap can simply register as companies, when they come under the provisions of company law. The best charities do that now.

Mr. Carlile: I have some professional experience of dealing with frauds in the charitable sector. They cause great unhappiness and anger to many members of the public.

Paying tax hurts because it involves the compulsory removal of money which we feel we have worked hard to earn. Taxes should never leave more than that most basic and inevitable sense of injustice which we feel when we are compelled to give our money to the Government, like it or not.

Unjust taxes are ultimately uncollectable, as the Government recognised when they decided to abolish the poll tax. At best, we cannot expect even just taxes to gain more than a grudging acceptance from the public. Yet they are essential if we are to sustain a society in which there are as few illiterate, poor, sick and homeless people as possible. The duty of government is to raise the taxes that are necessary to avoid those social evils which are self-evidently unacceptable and divisive.

That has not happened under the present Government, whose achievement falls short of their often-expressed ambition. Marginal rates of tax have been reduced, but many of our citizens—especially those with small businesses living on tight financial margins—say that under Conservative rule they have found themselves paying more tax than ever before.

The uniform business rate is a tax. It is not in proportion to the earnings of businesses. It is related to the size of premises, which may often, for historical reasons, bear no relationship to the prosperity of the business. It has gone up by 10·9 per cent., way ahead of inflation, and it greatly hurts small businesses.

I see that starkly in my rural constituency of Montgomeryshire. For example, there is an old established post office in the very small town of Llanfair Caereinion. The uniform business rate for that shop is so great that the family that has owned it for some time has had to place it on the market. The business rate has been the final nail in the financial coffin of its future. It has been rated so highly because 100 years ago the shop sold everything from food to basic agricultural equipment. Today, the public go to the B and Q and Payless stores to buy their garden spades, ironmongery and so on. As a result, the range of services offered by village shops is necessarily reduced.

The uniform business rate is a tax which has hurt small business very much. The new council tax promised by the Government is barely more just than the poll tax because, like the Labour party's proposals, it remains based on what seem to be notional or often fictitious property values which bear little relation to reality.

It is right to say that the very rich have benefited under this Government. The most articulate who have gained the most under the Government's taxation policies. That fact tends to distort the public report on the effect of the Government's policies on personal taxation. When one analyses carefully what has happened, it can be seen clearly that the gap between the very rich and the very poor has increased enormously under this Government at least partly as a result of their taxation policies.

I should like to be able to say that we can at least have confidence in the Government's predictions about the economic climate in which they can frame future tax policies. Unfortunately, however, their forecasting is so bad that it is not possible to have such confidence. I shall give just one example.

In the 1989-90 Red Book, the Government forecast a cumulative public sector debt repayment of £19 billion for the period 1990-93. In this year's Red Book, they predicted an increased deficit of £19 billion over the same period. That means that the forecast of cumulative public sector debt repayment for that period is £38 billion out. That is hardly a cause for trust or confidence for the future.

I also suggest that the Government have shown a surprising lack of imagination in dealing with the tax regime. It is especially surprising because, when he was Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) often spoke about reforming the tax system and modernising it for the future.

National insurance contributions are, in reality, a tax. The very term "national insurance contributions" is a lie which has been perpetuated for many decades. The truth is that from the moment a Labour Government introduced national insurance contributions immediately after the war the contributory principle has never applied. Those of us who pay money into private pension schemes know that our money goes into a pension fund and that, subject to the performance of the fund managers, when we reach the beginnings of our dotage we shall receive an income related to the performance of the investment. National insurance contributions go into the same fund as road fund licences, betting pool duty and every other tax. Therefore, the term "national insurance contributions" is a fiction. It is high time that the Government took steps to

[Mr. Carlile]

integrate income tax and national insurance contributions and described the NIC as the tax that it really is. They should thereafter integrate the tax and benefit system.

The personal tax system is very difficult for ordinary members of the public to understand. Even people who work in relatively straightforward jobs with a straightforward pay-as-you-earn code find it impossible to explain to their friends and neighbours—let alone to themselves—exactly how the tax—the pounds and pence—that they pay is calculated. Under a unified tax and benefit system it would be easier to understand personal taxation and benefits.

As for benefits, I am given to understand that in Department of Social Security offices there is now a four-volume looseleaf explanatory encyclopaedia that explains to the experts sitting behind the counter what the legislation means. That cannot possibly be the comprehensible, realistic and useful system to which we should aspire in a society in which the citizen should be able to understand at least the basics of Government activity.

It is time that we considered seriously the question of self-assessment of income tax. It is right to acknowledge the improved efficiencies in the Inland Revenue, although our accountants do not always find it easy to locate them in the bureaucratic system. Nevertheless, the Inland Revenue is a huge department dealing with vast complexities. It exercises a wide range of discretions and interprets legislation in many ways, perhaps nearly as many as there are collectors of taxes.

The self-assessment system works quite well for value added tax. There are now many refinements of VAT which have also made that system complicated, and I question whether they are all necessary. However, the system works reasonably well. The inspections carried out by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise reveal that, for the most part, people assess their VAT honestly and that in many businesses there may be a tendency to underclaim rather than overclaim inputs. Why could not a similar system work for a simplified income tax?

The hon. Member for Kensington rightly said that self-assessment involves considerable expenditure to the assessor, to the trader, to the individual who must assess his own tax. However, if one considers the bills that self-employed people—and, as one of them, I declare an interest—pay to their accountants, I do not believe that it could cost very much more. I hope that my accountant reads this speech—perhaps I should send him a copy. I do not believe that people could pay very much more to their accountants if the system was drawn sufficiently clearly. It would certainly save the Government a great deal of money in the long term, although it would take some time and expense to set up.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The hon. and learned Gentleman probably could not work out his income tax himself, so he would have to send details to his accountant and the bill would be multiplied by 10.

Mr. Carlile: I doubt that. I suspect that if there was a self-assessment system, as there is in the United States, the basis of the calculation would have to be very much simpler than at present.

Should we have confidence in what might happen to taxpayers under a Labour Government? I have talked about reforming the system, but we have heard little about that from the Labour party. We have heard merely about the raising of more taxes.

Let us consider—and the Labour party cannot run away from this issue—what would happen under Labour's proposals to, for example, a police inspector with five years' service. He is an important public servant, but he would be significantly worse off.

To take another example, the Government and, indeed, all political parties talk a great deal about encouraging enterprise. We should not underestimate the importance to national prosperity of the high income earners who earn several times the national average but fall far short of the absurd salaries claimed by some chairmen of public companies. A range of entrepreneurs will be discouraged from enterprise if they are overtaxed. The Labour party's proposals are unjust to precisely those people upon whom the national wealth depends.

The Labour party's proposals are fuzzy in the extreme. Labour has spoken of introducing a reduced rate band of 19 per cent., but has not told us why or when. Surely that proposal would be regressive compared with raising basic tax allowances. Why has not the Labour party recognised that allowances are much more progressive than reduced income tax rates? That seems to be a basic arithmetical fact which it has failed to recognise, and gives us cause for concern about its competence to deal with Treasury matters.

It is possible to produce a personal tax structure which is fairer than the one we have by raising basic tax allowances—a progressive measure; by adjusting the NIC ceiling to nearer the upper point of the basic rate band; by increasing personal taxation—something which my party has never sought to hide—but only for those who are earning several times national average earnings, in a way which would not discourage enterprise; by paying for local services by a tax related to the ability to pay, rather than by an unfair system based on property values which are often arbitrary; and by spending the revenue raised in a way which is seen as an investment in the country's future rather than merely profligacy, incompetence or muddle by government.

We should start with a clean sheet of paper in our consideration of taxation policy. We need to achieve the ends that will satisfy the taxpayer, so far as he or she will ever be satisfied by taxation, yet ensure that the national wealth remains intact.

Mr. Arbuthnot: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the retail prices index figures have now come out and show that inflation has fallen——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No, no, no; the hon. Gentleman cannot play that game with the House.

11.42 am

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I enjoyed the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). It seemed to be sound and rational. I only regret that his party's policies on Scotland are not equally sound and rational.

I heard from the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) something that I already knew about socialists—that they like spending other people's money. He essentially declared taxation to be a virtue. Under the proposals of all parties but ours, Scotland would pay even

more tax than any other part of the kingdom. We would pay income tax, corporation tax and national insurance tax—I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that we should call it a tax when it is a tax. Tax is a simple three-lettered word. We would also have to pay an assembly tax. Scotland would have the great privilege of enjoying the virtue that the hon. Gentleman claimed taxation was. We would not just have the present polygamy of taxes; we would have a further two wives. Scotland would have the privilege of additional beggary.

I take a simple view of tax: it is a form of slavery. A slave must work for his master for nothing. The extent to which a slave must work for his master for less than his worth is to that percentage slavery. If half one's income is taken by one's slave master, the Treasury or the Government, one is half slave and only half free. If 60 per cent. is taken, one is two thirds slave and one third free. Every increase in taxation is an exercise in the extension of the concept of slavery. Slaves, apart from excellent, charitable workers, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), are the only people who work for nothing.

There is a certain lesson to be learnt about the Labour party's proposals and its concept of taxation from its attitude to a matter which was discussed in the House this week—the tolls on the Forth and Erskine bridges. It is the Labour party's avowed view that the socialist-controlled joint boards should spend as much as they can on those bridges and resist the increase in the tolls to demonstrate that tolls are unjust. That seems to be a fairly perverse approach to taxation, but it is the Labour approach. To object to a toll of 60p, which is less than the cost of half a pint of beer, to travel by car from Fife to Edinburgh and instead to go by a nationalised train which costs £1·60 seems to be perverse.

Fundamental to the whole concept of socialism is the idea that money is like air—cosmopolitanly available. All one need do is to breathe in and out as often as one wants or to spend money as often as one wants because it is always there. I am not sure whether there will be all that much oxygen if the world population continues to increase as it is doing. One principle that is basic to economics—I do not suggest that I understand economics—and which my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) introduced is that the lower the tax, the higher the revenue, and the higher the tax, the lower the revenue. That is absolutely certain.

To propose to the nation an increase in taxation and an increase in public expenditure is a conundrum that could have been invented only in the acidic tank of socialism —they are contradictory ideas, as the financial and fiscal policies of the past 10 years have shown. The less we enslave those who earn, the more they earn and the more they contribute in taxation at a lower rate. That should be added to the ten commandments.

While I am on a biblical theme, let me say that I am reminded that there is a phrase in the Bible to the effect that the labourer is worthy of his hire. I have looked in vain for any text in either Testament to suggest that, having been worthy of it, he should have it taken off him afterwards and spent by someone else who is not in the vineyard. We are a rich and successful country, but this country was the poorest in western Europe in 1979 and Scotland was the poorest part of this country. Thanks to the Government's policies since then, Scotland has become the richest part of this country. I do not want it beggared by a tax-raising assembly or any of the other proposals advanced by the Opposition parties.

Mr. McMaster: I am very interested to learn that Scotland is now the richest part of the United Kingdom. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman elaborate the basis for his information so that I can try to convince my constituents who have lost their jobs and who are living in poor housing?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will not be persuaded to pursue that line.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: You have my double assurance on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker—with tax. The average industrial wage in Scotland is the highest in the United Kingdom with the exception of that in a small part of the south-east of England. I spend half the week in the south of England and half among the glories of the civilisation and quality of life in Scotland, so I know that the costs here are about double what they are there.

The philosophy of socialism is the philosophy of beggary, in two ways. Socialism has beggared every country in which it has been tried. I am not as familiar with Bolivia as is the hon. Member for Leeds, West—perhaps it is part of his constituency—but I am aware of the socialist Cuban economy and of the economy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which has been so beggared by socialism that Mr. Gorbachev, if he is still in place, is going to the G7 meeting to beg capitalism to bail out the corruption, rottenness and poverty of every socialist republic in his quarter of the globe.

Malawi, a socialist country, cannot feed itself. Mozambique, seven times the size of France with a coastline longer than that of Florida and the best soil on earth, not to mention a population only twice the size of Scotland's, cannot feed itself because it is run by socialists. I can think of no country in the world run by socialists which has not been beggared. I can think of no marxist or socialist regime which has ever created prosperity.

Not only does socialism beggar whole countries; it is itself based on a philosophy of beggary—we should for ever be whingeing and asking for handouts from bureaucrats of the state.

In Bulgaria, which sits next to Bolivia in the United Nations, one can see what socialist taxation policies do to a nation.

I have been to Poland on innumerable occasions over the past 20 years. Lorry loads of medical supplies were taken there through east Germany and given to the priests because if they had been given to the socialist bureaucrats they would have stolen or sold them. The only way to survive under the socialist Government of Poland was to have about 10 jobs or to go to western countries for a few years, earn some money and then return. Under Poland's previous Government a doctor earned about £40 a month. That is an example of a national health service under socialist tyranny. Socialist taxation policy would beggar this country in the way that it beggared it before. A rate of 98p in the pound is slavery, and 59p in the pound is fairly close to slavery.

Hon. Members who were properly brought up—in view of the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West I shall not mention in this context the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—will

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

remember the story of Red Riding Hood. For the purposes of my speech, the redhead who is the Leader of the Opposition is Red Riding Hood, and the Labour party is the grandmother. If Red Riding Hood tossed grannie out of bed and took her place in this cottage—and I hope that such a misfortune will never befall the British people—the Labour party would take off its lace cap and remove its undergarments and the wolf of taxation, theft and public ownership would be back at our throats.

Like the wolf dressed up as the grandmother, Labour taxes bear false names. They are called investment taxes, training taxes, assembly taxes and property taxes. The Opposition propose renationalisation, whatever they call it, without compensation, and will increase company tax and impose a tax on the value of property, which is a fatuous concept. A person who on marrying bought a flat for £100 may find that it is worth £100,000 by the time he is 80. On his retirement he will have to pay tax based on the value of a property which he has not improved, and which has increased in price purely because of an outside market force. The Opposition propose that people should be taxed on the value of an asset which produces no income with which to pay that tax. It is an iniquitous proposal.

I shall return to the philosophy of beggary and slavery. Under a Labour Government, a postmistress, a nurse, a postman or a traffic warden who saves a proportion of income for retirement and invests it in the glorious shares of the Scottish power companies would have to pay tax on the income from savings on which he has already paid tax. That is double taxation at its worst. It is a quadratic equation.

The welfare state results in many iniquities. For example, if a layabout has an accident and he has spent his unemployment benefit payments and any other moneys that he might have, he will be given legal aid to sue the district nurse who diligently made savings. She will not be given legal aid because she has savings, but the layabout will get it. Surely that is an immoral principle, but it is central to the Labour party's philosophy. The idea that a bureaucrat should hand out money from one person's pocket to the pocket of another, from the most thrifty to the least thrifty, is based on a principle that is objectionable in every characteristic.

The Russian Republic has today rejected socialism along with socialist taxation and all the implications of it. It has done so with a resounding cheer. Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, East Germany, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have all taken the same course. Is Britain to do the opposite? Are we to contribute from our income to cure the beggary of socialism in Russia? Is East Germany to be saved from socialist taxation and socialist principles by West Germany? I was in East Berlin on that great hogmanay when the first part of the wall came down. I watched it happen. I was in the Unter den Linden and the Kaiser Friedrichstrasse at the Brandenburg gate. I saw about 250,000 people celebrating freedom from socialism. I should be appalled to think that our nation would go back to such a thing.

I am glad to say that the great horses on the Brandenburg gate, which used to face west and were turned east by the socialists to allege that our system was decadent and theirs glorious, have been turned back again to the west, to the values of western civilisation. *[Interruption.]* In talking of the four horses of the apocalypse, one apocalypse that this country must not suffer is the return of a Labour Government and Labour policies, however disguised, mollified and embalmed they would be.

I have some business interests. I have certain companies that are hoping to make major investments in Scotland from all over the world. Not one of them would go ahead —I am talking about hundreds of millions of pounds—if a Labour Government were to be returned. That may be a good price for the hon. Member for Leeds, West, who could worship at the hideous altar of taxation, but I do not think that it is a price which the electorate would appreciate once it had come to pay it.

12.4 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I definitely came out second best on my ill-advised intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). I shall not pursue the subject of the four horses of the apocalypse nor, in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie), what was said about devolution. However, he has prompted me to question the Treasury seriously about Forth Bridge tolls. I represent the toll collectors of the Forth road bridge toll station.

There is much talk in Scotland about a second Forth road bridge. Some of us think that before we embark on that expenditure, there should be a serious discussion about whether we should continue with toll collection which, in itself, is responsible for many of the traffic jams from Fife, Perth, Kinross and elsewhere. They are a serious headache for the people who suffer from them. Nevertheless, one must ask: is not toll collection a contribution to the road problems west of Edinburgh? There are other problems such as the Barnton and the Newbridge roundabouts, but there should be an intelligent discussion on whether collecting tolls should be continued because it boils down to the fact that the road goes over water. Collection per pound in tolls used to be twelve and a half times as expensive as the collection of the standard rate of income tax. I should like the Treasury to comment on that.

On a Friday, we can discuss tax matters out of the yah-boo of the normal give and take of party politics. I wish to raise with the Treasury the rather complex issue of the terms and philosophy on which it thinks it has a continuing obligation in matters in which it has accepted property as tax in lieu of death duties. The specific case I have in mind, of which I have given short notice to Treasury officials, is that of beutiful Heveningham hall in Suffolk. To cut a long story short, I was told by Lord Schreiber that I ought to take an interest in the matter.

As a result, I tabled a number of pointed questions and wrote to Ministers. Yesterday, I visited Heveningham hall and I have never been so impressed as I was by the standard of restoration that is being conducted by the owners, whomsoever they are, under the guidance of Hussan Khamoud, Nicholas Playfair and Ralph Parry. I thought that the hall was superb because of their concern for detail and accuracy. They have also replaced the original fittings of this great house lost after a fire. Their work was absolutely commendable.

The Treasury should put its mind to monitoring what happens to a property once it has been accepted in lieu of death duties—even if it is in the guardianship of the National Trust—in the light of what happened to Heveningham hall in the mid-1980s. The Treasury should discuss the matter with the Department of the Environment, which is well aware of many of the issues.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dalyell: As the hon. and learned Gentleman is chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, of course I shall.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. An even more important one is the fact that much of our heritage is no longer restored because its owners are dissuaded from doing so because they have to pay value added tax on repairs. If one knocks all the windows out, puts on a flash-Harry roof, and other hideous things, as one is allowed to by the planning regulations, it becomes a new building and value added tax is not paid. However, the repair of historic houses is still subject to VAT.

Mr. Dalyell: That is a problem—especially at Heveningham hall, where, as I understand it, the entire cost of the work—including the expensive leading of the roof, which has been superbly done—is being met by the owners. The woodwork and plasterwork, on which I am to some extent qualified to comment, is also superb. However, the VAT problem is very real. Ian Richardson and the local group were wholly justified in expressing their concern over the past decade. I am very much in favour of local groups taking an interest in great buildings.

On Wednesday, I have the good fortune to have an Adjournment debate on the taxation of areas that are potential world heritage sites, such as Mar lodge. How does the state, in the form of the Treasury, place a value on ancient forests? Unless we come to grips with our capacity to protect our own ancient Caledonian forest, how can any right hon. or hon. Member lecture Sarawak, Brazil, Zaire, or wherever on how to look after their rain forests? It is almost impossible to value ancient woodland. It is not a simple forestry equation but a question of how we protect the only remaining part of the ancient European forest, which places us under a special obligation in respect of Mar lodge, in relation both to European heritage and world heritage sites.

In view of my Adjournment debate on Wednesday, I have written to the Prime Minister about how Scotland and the Scottish Office can be helped financially in relation to the designation of world heritage sites, which is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. I understand that the transfer of funds from the Department to the Scottish Office is a very real problem. In the circumstances, I ask the Treasury to review that aspect before the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) replies to my Adjournment debate on Wednesday night.

On a Friday, one can probably get away with saying something good about Treasury Ministers. I want to place on record the appreciation of many of us of the alteration in the Finance Bill on the treatment of gifts from big firms —particularly Hewlett-Packard, which dreamt up the scheme on its American experience, and its managing director, David Baldwin. In the hope that this will help academic institutions, I ask the Minister to explain how the Government will monitor the way that the scheme operates in practice. It is no use just saying that it has worked well in the United States, which it has. I should like to know in year two or three how academic institutions have benefited.

My next point concerns a matter that I raised in some detail in the Scottish Grand Committee, and I do not apologise for raising it again. I refer to the treatment of the sale of assets by universities to meet short-term crises. I have in mind the terrible state of the university of Edinburgh which, by any standards, is one of world importance. After a century and a half, it may have to sell its Audubon books, which are among one of the first editions purchased. Audubon, who was the great historian and painter of American birds, worked in Edinburgh between 1826 and 1839. It seems tragic to the Scots that these sales may have to take place to meet what one hopes are fairly short-term financial considerations and to close a crisis gap in expenditure. What is the Treasury's attitude?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to relate the hon. Member's remarks to the motion.

Mr. Dalyell: I anticipated that you would find it difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Knowing that you were in the Chair, I took the precaution of having the motion by me. It

"warns the British people to recognise . . . the Labour Party's promises of increased public spending".

I am speaking on the issue of increased public spending, which I hope brings me within order. I have done rather better with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than I did previously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will not press me on that matter.

Mr. Dalyell: In a letter on 29 May, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury stated:

"During the Public Expenditure debate on 15 May, you asked me about the sale by Edinburgh University of the Audubon book on birds, and I undertook to look into the matter.

You will have been referring to the decision by Edinburgh University on 13 May to identify for possible sale an edition of Audubon's 'Birds of America'. This was acquired by Edinburgh last century from its general funds, and the University is entirely free to dispose of unencumbered assets as it sees fit.

Edinburgh University forecasts a deficit of £5 million in the current academic year. It has accepted full responsibility for its current situation and is now determined to resolve its problems."

The letter goes on to refer to autonomous institutions. That is not an adequate answer. It is a national problem. Edinburgh university, like Leeds and Glasgow universities, has buildings all over its city.

There is an added problem, which I wish to raise with the Treasury—that of universities with great and famous medical schools. Medical professors and lecturers are paid significantly more than anyone else in any other department. Those moneys must come out of the total grants to the university, so departments such as engineering or physics are seriously disadvantaged if there is a large, distinguished medical school. I ask the Treasury to consider hiving off and detaching medical school expenditure from that of universities in general.

[Mr. Dalyell]

That brings me from Edinburgh to London and to the public expenditure issue at London zoo. I can put it no better than the considered opinion of Roger Wheater, writing as chairman of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens. He is also the Edinburgh director. He said:

"with decision day looming ever closer, I felt that I must place on record my feelings with regard to the future of London Zoo which has found its way into the hearts and minds of countless millions of British citizens and visitors to these shores during the 160 years of its existence. I do understand the Government's disquiet at the failure of the Zoological Society of London to get its Regent's Park house in order. I believe that it is right and proper to question why, despite funding already provided by Her Majesty's Government which was presumably given on the basis of a sound management strategy, it has not lifted itself out of the financial morass into which it had fallen.

However, I do hope that your tough attitude"—

that is how Mr. Wheater addresses Treasury and Environment Ministers—

"and I have no problems with this approach, is getting the answers you require but is also indicative of a desire to carefully examine the proposals which I know the Zoological Society of London are now putting to you which will dramatically reduce the size of the collection, thus providing more space for the species that remain. These plans should reduce the operating costs and in addition to space for the animals will allow for the development of exhibits which demonstrate much more clearly the environmental issues which face us in the world today and the positive way in which these conservation issues are being tackled. There is no doubt that the work already being carried out by zoos like London is rather understated. Indeed, the Chairman of the Select Committee"—

the Select Committee on the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi)—

"complained that he was totally unaware of the considerable scientific, conservation and education activities of the Society. The slimmed-down collection would seem to offer an excellent opportunity to promote these activities and those of other organisations involved in wildlife conservation, including it should be added, the Department of the Environment itself who might use the location as a shop window to publicise the considerable work of the Department in environmental matters, much of which I suspect is no better known to the public than the current work of the Zoological Society of London.

I am certain that all those who have some knowledge of London will hope that whatever mistakes, errors of judgment or timing that may have been made in the past by the Society, this will not be used as an excuse for disbanding one of the famous institutions of the world and one which for many years was pre-eminent in the world of zoology. I feel quite certain that the Regent's Park site provides excellent opportunities for the continuation of a living collection of animals with a commitment to conservation breeding, research and education paid for at least in part by the recreational activities of the visitors to the collection.

On the knotty question of finance, there seems to me to be little doubt that whatever shape the Zoo may take in the future, it will require some financial assistance from the public purse. Our colleagues in major zoos overseas are amazed that London is expected to operate without such assistance, subsidised as they are up to as much as 60 per cent. of operating costs as well as the provision of capital funding. This should not come as a surprise to the Department of the Environment as you will be aware of the financial commitment to museums and botanic gardens and what such support represents in terms of subsidy per visitor to the institutions concerned.

Minister, a zoo of London's scientific standing is no different from these other institutions. Particularly relevant are the botanic gardens who are responsible for living collections of plants in the same way as zoos are responsible for living animals. There seems to me to be profound cultural and historical reason for viewing these institutions as being so different and yet their activities, particularly at this time, are in fact so similar. It is frankly rather foolish to put forward the argument that because Kew Gardens has been financially supported by Government for 150 years that this makes it more deserving for support than a similar organisation which has managed until recently to remain financially solvent. I presume that over 150 years ago the government of the day made the decision that financial support from the public purse was essential for the future of Kew Gardens and made it available. I suggest that the wisdom that prevailed at that time and which allowed Kew to develop into its world pre-eminence, should once again prevail to ensure a similar future for Regent's Park.

I do not believe that any financial commitment should be made, however, without a clear understanding and approval of the new policy for the London Zoo site and I believe that within any future funding must be included the appointment onto the Council of ZSL representatives of the Department of the Environment to ensure that the financial commitment from the public purse to the institution is used for purposes which follow the new policy for the collection and which develop and enhanced the excellence of its work."

In view of the public expenditure involved in London zoo, this House ought to have a debate before the middle of July or whenever——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is opening the way for a debate now, if the Chair would permit it. I had hoped that by now he would have related his remarks to the central theme of the motion, which is about taxation.

Mr. Dalyell: That brings me directly to paragraph 9.40, entitled "Tax and Accounting", of the House of Lords report on scientific innovation which says:

"One massive disadvantage which is faced by British industry is the high cost of capital in the United Kingdom compared to that in competitor countries. High interest rates, and the expectation by investors of high financial returns, can discourage industrial investment in innovation. In these circumstances it is important that wherever possible obstacles to investment should be reduced."

Paragraphs 9.40 to 9.43 of the House of Lords report are of crucial importance to this country. Thanks to the Foundation for Science and Technology, I attended a presentation last week on the House of Lords report which was introduced by the noble Lord Caldecote, at which Professor Rothwell and Mr. Oscar Roith, one of the advisers to the Committee, also spoke. I think that there ought to be a discussion of this document before the end of July, important as it is to taxation.

Finally, those of us who represent hundreds of people who work for ICI are very bothered about the consequences, if Lord Hanson goes ahead with his bid. Unlike a large number of my colleagues, I have good experiences of Lord Hanson. On the occasion when I raised——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman intends to show me how this relates to the substance of the motion.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes. The motion concerns public expenditure, which is certainly involved in the potential takeover of ICI. However, you have been very lenient with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as there are other hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate I shall only refer to the case that I should have liked to make concerning the article by Sir John Harvey-Jones in the *Observer*—that he wished

"Lord Hanson would take his money and go away."

I would simply register the fact that the ICI issue is central to the political concerns of many of us. I hope that the Government will take note of the various delegations that will be going to see Ministers next week.

12.25 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) when he is not on one of his hobby horses. He analyses issues very closely. We do not always have the opportunity to listen to him in the sort of mood that he is in today. I found great delight particularly in his reference to public buildings and in his comments about London zoo, to which I have now referred in passing and from which I shall pass on before I run any risks.

I wish to refer to the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). I believe firmly that it is every citizen's inalienable right in a democracy to pay as little tax as is legally possible. That has been the view of our courts since time immemorial. I well remember, in the days of high taxation, men on the production lines in the factories where I worked coming to me and saying, "How can we pay less tax on our overtime money—tax that is being imposed on us by this Labour Government?" They were advised about how they could pay less tax legally. These are not millionaires but production workers. It is also interesting that the hon. Member for Leeds, West referred to the decade of various troubles but that he forgot to talk about that decade as the decade of Liverpool and Hatton, so vividly brought to our screens by "GBH." That is a subject which the Labour party wants to avoid as much as it can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) is having a well-deserved break, having been here all the time so far, but he will have the opportunity to read in *Hansard* what I say. In his opening speech he analysed taxation policies, going a long way back, in a way that we have not heard in the House for a very long time. I do not propose to refer to Adam Smith. The only Adam with whom I was particularly familiar was Old Adam who had a gardening strip in the *Sunday Express*. He also was a wise old bird—as was Adam Smith. We would do well to learn from both. I have already told my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington that I cannot, alas, stay until the end of the debate, but I, too, will read what is said in my absence.

My hon. Friend began by giving us a history of taxation. History teaches us lessons. We should be very unwise if we failed to observe the lessons that history teaches us. One lesson that cannot be learnt often enough is that Labour is the party of high taxation. It is also the party which has always left office with this country more in debt than when it was elected. At the next election there will be millions of first-time voters who did not experience the nonsense of selective employment tax, which was a tax on jobs, or 98 per cent. taxation, or this folly of taxing overtime very heavily and who did not——

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: If I may finish this statement I shall, of course, give way.

They did not experience the humiliation of the International Monetary Fund dictating our policy—a policy which meant that the then Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer had to cut hospital building for the only time in our history. Labour has always presided over the devaluation of sterling. We must continue to drive home those lessons.

Mr. Brown: We are not planning to do any of the things that the hon. Gentleman is denouncing.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Nor did the previous Labour Government, but they still got us into a mess. The hon. Gentleman was not a member of that Government, but he should read their pious declarations and the book of Lord Barnett in which he says how he tried to cope with their follies but failed because he was unable to control their mad spending desires. He will then see the need to drive those lessons home.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No. The hon. Lady has been opening letters for the past 10 minutes. She came in late, and I shall not give way to her.

We have a duty to remind the public of those facts and that they will experience the dangers of a socialist Government even if they vote for the Liberal Democrats, who kept the previous Labour Government in power for a year longer than was necessary to taste the crumbs of power.

As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said, Labour policies sound attractive—they always do. The pill is always sugar coated, but, my God, when one gets below the sugar, one suffers. Labour policies always seem achievable, but they never are, except at exorbitant cost.

All too often, Labour produces a menu without prices, but they have been smoked out. It fell for the media hype that there would be a summer election and was forced to rush out its policies, which are now being analysed by the City and by economists and are being shown to be bogus. They will involve immense costs if Labour is elected.

To pay for Labour's programme, police sergeants, senior nurses and deputy head teachers will be clobbered by having to pay higher taxes and national insurance contributions. We are told that they are the super rich because they earn £20,000 a year. We have been told how many people will pay higher taxation, but it will be interesting to discover whether the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East can clear up our anxiety and uncertainties. The shadow Chief Secretary said that one in 20 will pay higher taxes; the Leader of the Opposition said that it will be one in 18; and the shadow Chancellor says that it will be one in eight. It will be interesting to know which of those is right, but it is crystal clear that under Labour everybody will pay higher taxes because its rates will force up the cost of living. In addition, its jobs tax will lead to fewer jobs, so all of us will pay more.

Almost every Labour party spokesman says that more must be spent, but not necessarily all at once. Yet, some of them are saying, "We do not need to raise taxation." That does not add up. It sounds fine, but the various interest groups that are pushing for more expenditure will ask, "How much will be spent on us?"

At no time in our history since 1948—and this will be so in the next 10 years—have we spent enough on the national health service. We can never spend enough on the

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

national health service because medical science is advancing all the time. The vast increases that have been given in the past 11 years have not been, and never could be, sufficient to keep up. A Labour Minister once said that the needs of the NHS were infinite and that the resources would always be finite. The sooner the Labour party realises that and stops trying to kid the public that Labour would spend more on the NHS, the better it will be for the peace of mind of the people.

Joe Soap public will have to pay higher taxes under a Labour Government when they come to power in 1999 or the year 2000. Labour certainly will not get in next time. Despite the blarney and blandishments of Labour Members, the City now begins to realise that behind the acceptable face of socialism portrayed by the Labour spokesman to whom I have referred, there are those, such as the former chairman of the Labour party, who tell us that we will see the real agenda of the Labour party when Labour is elected, and we know that to be a fact.

In the manner of the hon. Member for Leeds, West, Labour Members attack high salaries. They attack British Telecom for high profits. Why do they always conceal the truth? The Post Office used to run our telephone service. We then had outdated equipment—basically, it was Strowger, the invention of an American undertaker pre-1914. We had to share party lines because there were not enough lines, and we had to wait months for new phones. We as taxpayers had to foot the losses of the Post Office.

I know about that in detail because I was for several years chairman of the postal and telecommunications committee of the CBI and a member of the Post Office Users' National Council until I was sacked by Shirley Williams because I was Conservative. She did not have the guts to tell me herself. She got one of her junior Ministers to tell me.

British Telecom is now private. There are no shared party lines. With its massive digital equipment, one may wait a couple of weeks for a new phone. Calls are now a fifth cheaper than when it was privatised. Shareholders get dividends, the Exchequer gets taxation on those dividends, and it gets corporation tax on BT's profits, instead of having to ask the taxpayer to fund the country's telephone system. That is the story that Labour Members never dare tell us. That is why they know in the end that the public will not fall for their nonsense of renationalising—by 2 per cent. more, or whatever the figure may be—of BT.

Ms. Abbott: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to talk about British Telecom without mentioning the astronomic rise in directory inquiry call charges?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is barely a point of order for the Chair. All hon. Members are responsible for the speeches that they make in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: The hon. Lady, in raising that bogus point of order, should have reminded us that costs to the general public have come down by 6 per cent. as a consequence of charging for directory inquiry calls, so that only those who use that service pay, instead of all of us paying. Let us have no more of that sort of intervention, although it was helpful, which the hon. Lady did not intend it to be.

The capital programmes today of BT and all our nationalised industries, now privatised, can go ahead without the Treasury trying to treble guess everybody. That was the trouble in the past, though not under Conservative rule. In the past, when those industries were nationalised—as we heard in a brilliant speech last week from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)—an industry worked out what it wanted, went to the sponsoring Ministry, which reworked it, and it then went to the Treasury, which re-reworked it. The Treasury then replied, "Of course you would like three digital exchanges, but we have a bridge to build and we regard that as more important." Now, when any of the privatised industries wants to carry out a capital project, it does so without recourse to taxation and the Treasury, which is a saner way of managing things.

All that would disappear were a Labour Government to be elected again. We have seen and heard about the open agenda and the hidden agenda. I prefer to believe, from experience, that the hidden agenda would operate.

There is one basic difference between the Tory party and the other parties: we believe that it is better to let people's money fructify in their own pockets. We do not believe that we know better how to spend other people's money. The choice is simple: high taxation under the socialists and Liberal Democrats, or low taxation under the Tories.

12.39 pm

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate. I was delighted to be third in the ballot for private Member's motions, but I was beginning to suspect that we might not get that far today. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on taxation.

We have heard much rhetoric about the effect of the Government's policies on taxation over the past decade, but I shall concentrate on the real effects, as I know them from my constituency and elsewhere, on real people. Many hon. Members did not try to hide the fact that during the past 10 years the Government have made the rich richer and the poor poorer. Every report and all the statistical evidence shows that to be the case.

We have heard some carefully reasoned arguments today, but we know that some adherents of the Conservative cause argue openly elsewhere that they want to apply the law of the jungle in what should be a sophisticated civilisation so that the strong should be rewarded and the weak left to founder. No one would dispute the wisdom of encouraging the strong to prosper, but to do that at the expense of the weak and of people who cannot therefore contribute to the economy is not good. I have always believed that we should judge a civilisation not by how great its national assets are, but by how it treats the weakest in society. Judged by that criterion over the past decade, the Government do not fare at all well.

Specific groups have been mentioned today. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) referred to someone who is unemployed and able to receive legal aid, whereas a district nurse was unable to do so. I do not dispute that, but that criterion

—or hidden tax—could also be said to apply to other groups. Let us consider, for example, the senior citizens who have worked all their lives and contributed to their works pension funds, but now discover that any income that they receive from that source is deducted pound for a pound so that they are not entitled to a reduction in community charge or to housing benefit. They are, in many cases, no better off for having contributed to their works pension schemes, which is clearly wrong.

I had intended to refer in my private Member's motion to the fact that the case for the disabled is equally strong, but I shall leave that for the moment except to issue a word of caution to the Government. The disabled community of Great Britain comprises about 6·5 million people, in addition to their families and those who care for them. It would be folly for anyone to ignore their wishes or those of all the voluntary and lobby groups that support the disabled. I ask the Minister to spell out how the cuts in direct taxation have helped such people in the past decade, as the groups involved say that they do not understand it. Disabled people have had their benefits changed and are now worse off. They now pay a higher proportion of their earnings in value added tax and find it increasingly difficult to find a place in the job market.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman is not alone in being concerned for the well-being of the disabled. I hope that he is not suggesting that because someone is disabled he or she cannot do a job. Many disabled people do jobs and earn substantial incomes, and I include myself in that category.

Mr. McMaster: I certainly accept that we do not have a monopoly of concern for the disabled. That is not in dispute. My point is that if the Government continue to pursue their policies on the disabled, the partnership and consensus will be in jeopardy.

I have personal knowledge of the work that disabled people can do and the role that they can play in the community. For 10 years I taught horticulture in a Glasgow college. For the last two of those years I was seconded to a project to help disabled people into employment. During that period I learnt the salutary lesson that disabled people can make a contribution. Is a person who is wheelchair-bound any less able to do a secretarial job? Is someone with a learning difficulty any less able to do many jobs? There is a good example in this Chamber: is someone with a hearing impairment any less able to do this job? There are many such good examples.

I am aware that I am straying wide of the debate and I shall return to it. The purpose of taxation is to provide services at the point of need. Those in need include groups in the community with particular disadvantages. Much has been made of the Government's targeting of income tax and the philosophy that lies behind it. In 1985 when my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) was promoting the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 he said at a press conference:

"The principal purpose is to ensure greater representation of disabled people in decisions which affect their own lives. Disabled people should not be continually done unto."

This morning Tory Members have applied that argument to all people. They have said that they want to give everybody more control of their lives, more say and more freedom, and that the Government should not do unto them. There is consensus on that point when it is applied to disabled people and an opportunity for partnership, but only if the Government apply to them the policies to which the Government say they are committed.

An important aspect of taxation relates to the 1986 Act. For six years the disabled community and all the organisations that serve it have believed that the Act would be implemented. Government agencies, voluntary agencies and local authorities have already spent considerable sums of taxpayers' money training staff to cope with it, only to find now that the Act will not be implemented. That is a serious waste of taxpayers' money.

Ms. Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that cuts in direct taxation do absolutely nothing for those on benefit and those who depend on state social security? Those people have suffered during the past 12 years. Does he further agree that the unpleasant gloating of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) over the Government's success in allowing rich people's money to fructify in their pockets, Swiss bank accounts and offshore trusts, and his complete lack of concern for people on benefit, pensioners, the low paid, women dependent on social security and those who have suffered under the Government, will ensure that he is replaced in short order by Miss Glenda Jackson, the Labour party candidate in his constituency?

Mr. McMaster: I certainly agree. The old adage has come to life: to make the rich work harder, pay them more; to make the poor work harder, pay them less. That is the Conservative philosophy and it completely misses out disabled people who do not even have the opportunity to work and pay taxes.

The Government's failure to implement the 1986 Act has another effect on disabled people. The Act provided for assessment of needs. If the Government intend, as they say they do, to target their resources where they are required, how can they proceed without an assessment of needs? Globally speaking, no new legislation has superseded the 1986 Act—the only new element has been the right of appeal.

Last night I had the good fortune to be in the company of and to hear a speech by the only Member in the House who is as wise as and even more distinguished than you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I refer to Mr. Speaker himself, who said:

"Parliament should not only deal with issues affecting all the people. It should deal with issues which affect any of the people."

The disabled are being discriminated against still and the Government have the legislation in place to do something about that—if only they will implement the 1986 Act.

A few weeks ago I tabled a parliamentary question to the Secretary of State for Scotland asking how many manufacturing jobs had been lost in the area with a Paisley postcode. The answer was that 76 per cent. of such jobs in that area had been lost. There used to be 19,100; now there are 4,500. So 14,600 people, three quarters of those who worked in manufacturing industry, have lost their jobs. That is the real effect of the Government's taxation and economic policies.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the fact that this week Babcock, a name which he will recognise, is celebrating 100 years of successful business in Scotland? Will he further reflect that in the past few years Babcock's work force has fallen from more than 6,000 to

[Mr. Bill Walker]

between 1,500 and 2,000—yet productivity is higher than before? Now the company has sure jobs in a difficult and competitive international market and it is no longer vulnerable, as it was when too many people worked for it. I was told all this by the chief executive of the company—does the hon. Gentleman dispute it?

Mr. McMaster: Babcock is actually in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), but the last time I visited it to talk to the management—it was during the Gulf crisis—I learnt that when the company had to freeze its contracts the Government would not give it a bridging loan. So there is everything to be proud of when productivity is improved but nothing to be proud of if, when it has been improved, the opportunity to expand is not taken up. Babcock is capable of doing many other things and of entering many other markets. It is an excellent company, but when it was in difficulty it did not receive Government support.

Less than half a mile from Babcock used to be a company called Howden's. It was a world leader in renewable energy—a fashionable idea—and at the forefront of environmentally friendly renewable energy products. While still in profit, the company closed down due to a combination of factors, not least among which were high interest rates and the associated economic problems of this country. Rolls-Royce is another example. It has just made redundant 6,000 workers, some of whom worked in the Hillington engine factory. Rolls-Royce announced today that it is to open a factory in Germany. How can it be called economic success when workers are losing their jobs? They are not getting a chance to improve productivity because their jobs are going to other countries. There must be lessons to be learned from that.

Ms. Abbott: My hon. Friend ably describes the shrinking of our manufacturing base. Does he agree that the tentacles of the recession reaching into the south-east and affecting white collar jobs in the service industries that were set up in the latter half of the 1980s will ensure that the Government are swept away at the next general election?

Mr. McMaster: I agree. I knew that incomes in the south-east were higher than in Scotland, but I am a new Member and in the six months that I have been here I have seen many poorly clad children in London. That is because all family income is used to fund high-interest mortgages.

The motion refers to the "initiative and enterprise" which Government taxation policies have created. I am disappointed that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) is not in his place, because he takes a great interest in and is an expert on the fashion industry. I was one of the four Labour Members present when the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) spoke about alleged Folletting in the Labour party. We did not look as if we had been Folletted. In the spirit of the initiative and enterprise mentioned in the motion, I suggest that some Conservative Members should be "Fairbairned". That would certainly bring some colour to the House.

Ten years ago Paisley was famous for its thread mills, but they have all closed as a result of the Government's economic policies. The paisley pattern is world renowned. I am wearing a paisley-patterned tie, as are some other hon. Members. Not a single stitch of the paisley pattern is now sewn in Paisley. For many months the local authority and I and my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North and others have been trying to persuade industry to manufacture paisley-patterned goods in Paisley. That is bound to be an economic success, but we have not found the enterprise and initiative that are necessary to bring it about.

Conservative Members have spoken about high indirect taxation. The rich can only spend so much of a tax cut. It would make far more sense to give the majority of consumers more money, and that can be done only through a measure of wealth distribution. The Labour party has plainly said that it will not promise anything or do anything that it cannot afford. We have also said that people such as pensioners and the disabled, who have suffered over the past decade, must be given more spending power.

Wealth must be created before taxes can be paid. Employed people make a great contribution through pay-as-you-earn, so it makes sense to get more people back to work. In that regard the Government have singularly failed. Worse than that, they have pursued policies that have put people out of work.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said—I am sure that many Conservative Members are fed up hearing my colleagues quote the right hon. Gentleman's statement, but we shall continue to do so—that unemployment was a price well worth paying. I can assure Conservative Members that the electorate in my constituency and other electorates elsewhere think that unemployment is a price which the country cannot afford to pay. It is an issue which will guide the electorate generally when it comes to place its cross on the ballot paper at the general election.

Among the many who have been disfranchised from employment are the disabled. That has had many effects, including economic effects. If disabled people do not work, they cannot contribute to the income tax system. That means that they do not have a chance to contribute to the economy, and there is a dignity to be gained from making that contribution. There is also an economic benefit in getting people back to work.

Self-esteem is much enhanced if someone feels that he is contributing to society. That leads to improvements within the community generally and to many social benefits. It would do us all well to remember that none of us can say any more than that he or she is temporarily able-bodied. Some people are born disabled and others become disabled. We do not know what lies before us, so concern for the disabled is something which we should all share.

Having worked on a project with disabled people, I believe that there is a tremendous pool of untapped talent among the disabled community. It was made evident in the film "The Rain Man" that if someone has a disability there tends to be a compensatory ability. That is why we should always emphasise ability rather than disability.

When disabled people who want to work are kept out of work, their disabilities are emphasised and their abilities become diminished. That leads to personal and social problems as well as economic problems. As I have said, it is important that disabled people should be able to contribute to the community.

There is much employment discrimination. For many years there has been a legislative requirement that

employers should meet the 3 per cent. quota and ensure that 3 per cent. of the work force comprises the disabled. We all know that that requirement has not been enforced and that it has become almost a voluntary objective. I served as the leader of a council and I know that the Department of Employment gave awards to employers who ensured that 1 per cent. of their work force were disabled people. In other words, they were given awards for breaking the law by two thirds.

The Government's record is not honourable. I tabled a question to the Secretary of State for Scotland a few weeks ago asking him to state the extent to which the Scottish health service had succeeded in meeting the target quota. I selected the Scottish health service because I thought that a public spending body would have some sympathy for and empathy with those with disabilities. I discovered that over a 10-year period the employment of disabled people as a percentage of the work force had declined from 0·5 per cent. to 0·2 per cent. It seems that the shortfall is becoming worse.

I was fortunate last night to receive a reply to a question from the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), in his capacity as a representative of the House of Commons Commission. I am sorry to inform the House that, far from our meeting the quota, only 0·6 per cent. of those employed in this place are disabled. The place that enacted the legislation has not implemented it. Indeed, it is more than two thirds short of the quota.

There is a great deal to do if we are to get disabled people back into the community and ensure that they are given a full place in it. Another problem—it is one that many employers would identify—is getting those who are registered disabled to take employment. From my experience as a councillor and in my place of work before I became a Member, I know that it can be difficult to get the registered to take up employment. That is because they do not want to carry that label with them. I am conscious that I am straying from the point, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the simple answer would be to amend the legislation so that anyone who is registered or eligible to be registered as disabled comes under the remit of the Disabled Persons (Service, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. That is what we could do.

To return to the subject of taxation which I should be discussing, the question is: how can we get the weakest in our community back into employment? I suggest in my motion that if employers deliberately—rather than accidentally—fail to achieve the quota, we should consider penalising them for not doing so. The money then raised should be paid into an equalisation fund which could be distributed for aids to access, rehabilitation and support for disabled people.

We have heard an important principle advanced by Conservative Members today. They suggest that only those who use British Telecom's directory inquiry service should pay the charges. That principle could be adopted to ensure that only bad employers were forced to pay. In fact, there could be tax incentives for good ones. The first report of the Select Committee on Employment in 1990-91 supported such a measure and the tightening of the quota system. That Committee, of course, has a Conservative majority.

The Government's tax policy has penalised many people, especially the most vulnerable in the community. I reiterate my earlier point that Conservative Members seem to be arguing that to make the rich work harder, one has to pay them more, but that to make the poor work harder one pays them less. Everything that Conservative Members have said today convinces me that that is their view.

It should be emphasised that the Labour party has stated that it would have lower taxes for those on the lowest earnings—they would be even lower than now. There should also be tax incentives for good employers, especially those who invest in training and in becoming a good employer. We would, therefore, increase wealth by increasing tax income through getting people back to work.

1.7 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) has made an eloquent plea on behalf of the disabled. He obviously has a serious and deep knowledge of the subject, and I am glad that he was at least able to make the opening speech of the debate that he had hoped would follow this one by topping and tailing his speech with a little bit about the Labour party's tax policy. Concern for the disabled is widely shared in the House. He will find that the Government's record on increasing spending on the disabled is pretty good.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on picking the subject of taxation policy for the debate. His motion gives us an opportunity to examine the stark difference between the Conservative Government's policy on taxation and that of the Opposition. It will enable us to strip away the fig leaves of respectability with which the Labour party has sought to conceal its plans for vastly increased public spending, leading to vastly increased taxes.

In the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) we heard the authentic voice of socialism—a hatred and envy of personal success that motivates many Labour Back Benchers, if not those on the Front Bench who are hungry for office. Those plans and the envy mean that the Labour party has a secret agenda of tax increases, not just for the so-called rich but for all taxpayers. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) reminded us, the Labour party's definition of the so-called super-rich will have to include nurses, police inspectors and teachers or there will not be any money to pay for its spending pledges.

To the contrary, the Government seek to distribute the growth of the economy in a balanced way, part of it going in increases in spending on the priority public service and part of it going to reduce the tax burden.

The Labour party, as always, seeks to increase public sector spending, while giving none of the benefits of growth to the taxpayer. What is more, with its hostility to all the measures that we have taken to improve efficiency in the public sector, there is absolutely no assurance that increased public spending would do anything but raise wages and employment in the public sector. That is unlikely to improve the service. It is right to debate these issues properly as they represent a significant difference between the Conservative and Labour parties. Some Opposition speeches have borne that out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington drew on the comparative history of what has happened when Labour and Conservative Governments have been in office.

[Mr. John Maples]

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) called for a review of charity law. Many people believe that there are problems with that body of law. However, I am sure that he will accept it when I say that that is not one of my responsibilities. I know that his concerns and those of others are widely known, and I am sure that they have been heard.

The hon. and learned Gentleman suggested that we should have a system of self-assessment for tax. Most taxpayers in the United Kingdom are on PAYE—pay as you earn—and do not have to make any tax return. I am not sure whether there is an advantage in putting those people on self-assessment. The Treasury is publishing shortly a consultation document on schedule D taxpayers, the self-employed. I do not know what that document will say, but in the context of the debate on that subject it is appropriate to discuss it now.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) has not been to the Skinner school on the rules of order; otherwise he would have been able to slip in the fact that the inflation rate for May has fallen. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend was stopped from doing so. The inflation rate has fallen to 5·8 per cent. and that shows that the Government are on course for our target of 4 per cent. by the end of the year.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House what is the underlying rate?

Mr. Maples: The underlying rate fell from 6·8 per cent. to 6·6 per cent. That shows that the headline rate of inflation, which the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Maples: I will not give way as I have already answered the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman used to say that most attention should be paid to the headline rate of inflation. Is he suggesting that we should use an inaccurate definition of the underlying rate of inflation that leaves the VAT increase in but takes the community charge decrease out? He knows as well as I that that is an extremely misleading definition of the underlying rate of inflation. That is pure mischief making by those who use that old definition.

At the heart of the debate lies the question of which policies are more likely to produce faster and sustainable growth. Only growth can provide the resources for increased spending on priority services and only growth can provide higher take-home pay. If growth is low, more public spending means heavier taxation. If growth is fast, the resources are there to increase spending where needed, to reduce the tax rates and to increase take-home pay.

The growth dividend that we achieved in the 1980s enabled us to increase public spending in real terms by 7 per cent. while reducing it as a proportion of the gross domestic product from more than 47 per cent. to just over 40 per cent. That growth also enabled us to slash the public sector borrowing requirement from 5 per cent. of GDP when we took office. I should remind the House that it was more than 9 per cent. in 1975-76, which is the equivalent now of £60 billion. We have had a substantial surplus in two of the past three financial years and a small surplus in the most recent financial year.

The growth dividend has also enabled the real take-home pay of a married man on average earnings with two children to rise by no less than 37 per cent.—about £70 a week. That is a measure of what the growth dividend has achieved and the way in which it has been possible to divide it. If we had sought to spend the entire dividend in the public sector, and had raised taxes to do so, we would never have achieved the growth that has enabled us to achieve those three objectives.

Despite the huge reduction in Government borrowing, the tax burden on all multiples of average earnings is lower today than it would have been had we done no more than index the tax regime that we inherited in 1978-79.

Between 1974 and 1979, when the Labour party was in office, it became clear that if one was soft on spending, the state sector would grow as a proportion of GDP. That is inevitable, as is the fact that the tax burden rises. If that happens, average tax rates and marginal tax rates will rise. That is what happened under Labour. The Conservative Government understand that and we have limited the growth of the public sector to what the taxpayer can afford. That has enabled public spending to grow at the same rate at which the economy has grown—in fact, slightly faster—without increasing the tax burden. Without a benchmark, public spending would soon be out of control. Labour would not only be without such a benchmark—we have set a target of around 40 per cent. —but has a whole raft of spending commitments that would obliterate in weeks any target that it set. That is what happened before. We remember what occurred when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was Chancellor of the Exchequer and public expenditure ran out of control.

Borrowing consistently on a large scale does not solve the problem either. In 1979, the Government were borrowing 5·5 per cent. of gross domestic product—down from nearly 10 per cent. a few years earlier. At today's prices, 5·5 per cent. is £30,000 million—taxes that were not raised at the time, but have to be paid for with interest now. If one had accumulated 5·5 per cent. a year of GDP since 1979, it would have added nearly £200 billion to public debt. That would have required nearly £20 billion per year in interest to service, which alone would be the equivalent of 10p on income tax or a substantial cut in a sector of public expenditure. Borrowing is not an alternative to tax. It simply defers the cost, making the next generation pay for the excesses of the current generation.

Even if we assume that Labour, on taking office, ran a 2·5 per cent. public sector borrowing requirement, at the end of five years it would have added £72 billion to public sector debt, involving more than £7 billion of debt servicing, or 4p on income tax, or an equivalent cut in public expenditure.

The last Labour Government tested the limits of what could be levied in taxation. In 1979, the basic rate of income tax was 33p, having been 35p before the election. The top rate was 83p, and there was an extra 15p on investment income. There were six higher rate tax bands. Corporation tax was 52 per cent.

It was not only the rich who were howling at those tax rates. As the then Prime Minister, now Lord Callaghan, said in 1978:

"If you talk to people in the factories and in the clubs, they all want to pay less tax."

They still do. It is no wonder that such high rates of tax were a disincentive. Between 1975 and 1979, some of the country's most valuable managers and qualified staff emigrated, with the brain drain taking 68,000 well-qualified people away from Britain.

Tax reform is only one aspect—albeit a vital one—of the Government's commitment to an irreversible improvement in the supply side. We demonstrated that commitment almost as soon as we came to office by demolishing the edifice of control that had incarcerated British firms for so long. Pay, price, and dividend controls were abolished. Hire purchase controls went. Foreign exchange controls were dismantled. Those steps had a decisive influence on the behaviour of companies, which no longer had to compete with one hand tied behind their back.

Equally important were our measures to make the labour market work better. Changes in trade union legislation introduced more democratic procedures and made unions more accountable under the law. The result was that last year the number of stoppages due to industrial disputes was the lowest since 1935. Firms across the world now see the United Kingdom as a prime site for industrial investment. In 1988 and 1989, the United Kingdom took almost two fifths of all inward investment into the EEC.

Two vital ingredients are supply side policy and lower marginal tax rates, and competition. Labour does not appear to believe in either. Over the past week or so the *Financial Times* has examined various aspects of Labour party policy and how it appears to have improved. They were summed up in a leader entitled "Labour as government". In the context of lower tax rates and competition, that article made two points that I could not put better myself:

"Labour's proposed multi-band income tax is unnecessarily unwieldy and the implicit top rate—59 per cent.—too high . . . and the intention to sustain substantial public borrowing is worrying.

Nevertheless, the most serious doubts lie elsewhere. Labour may try to talk about the market, but it is a foreign language. Whenever it tries to utter a complex thought, Labour returns instinctively to its dirigiste native tongue. From Vancouver to Vladivostock, the importance of competition and individual choice were the most appealing themes of the 1980s. Most people find the ability to make choices for themselves more attractive than the right to a tiny voice in collective decisions. Furthermore, the resulting competition provides a spur to improved performance and disciplines the arrogance of organised producers."

That article adds that the "hole in the heart" of Labour policy is

"the resistance to competition and individual choice, a resistance demonstrated as much in its plans for education and health as in its plans for BT."

Those are two essential ingredients on the supply side. They were essential for the growth of the economy that was achieved in the 1980s.

Public spending, which peaked at nearly 50 per cent. of national income, was simply too high for the taxpayer to sustain. It is no surprise that during the 1970s the United Kingdom was at the bottom of the league table of economic growth. In the 1980s, it was near the top of the European growth league. Indeed, the United Kingdom was the only member of the G7 to have a better average growth rate in the 1980s than in the 1970s.

Under the Government, non-oil gross domestic product has grown by an average of 1·9 per cent. a year—that is, after taking account of the downturn in the second half of 1990. Under the previous Labour Government, non-oil GDP grew by only 1·2 per cent. What is more, growth in the 1980s was much more broadly spread than in the previous decade. Investment grew faster than consumption, and that did not happen between 1974 and 1979. During that period, annual capital formation grew by 0·3 per cent.—yes, 0·3 per cent.—a year. The non-oil economy grew at an average of only 1·2 per cent. Inflation averaged 15½ per cent. We should remember that in the context of today's announcement. Unsurprisingly, we were bottom of most international growth leagues.

After we sorted out the mess that we had inherited, the British economy grew strongly. Between 1981 and 1990 it grew at over 3 per cent. a year. In the 1980s, the United Kingdom economy grew faster than those of Germany and France. In fact, our performance was better than that of all major European Community countries except Spain. We also did better than West Germany or France on investment growth and manufacturing productivity.

There are many reasons for that better performance. A vital ingredient has been the Government's approach to taxation and the lower marginal rates now imposed. We made our approach clear in our 1979 manifesto. We felt that direct taxes were too high and that marginal rates were far too high. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said, there has been a switch from direct to indirect taxation. That enables people to make their own decisions about spending, and thus about the level of tax, at least at the margin, imposed on them.

Since 1981 we have corrected the previous Labour Government's borrowing binge. The overall tax burden has been reduced from 40 per cent. to just under 38 per cent., and is forecast to fall to 37 per cent. in 1991-92. Marginal rates of tax have also decreased substantially. The basic rate of income tax is down from 33p to 25p—lower than at any time since the 1930s. Personal allowances have risen by over 27 per cent. more than prices, taking almost 2 million people out of the tax system. Nine higher rates of income tax have been reduced to a single higher rate of 40 per cent. Corporation tax at 33 per cent. is one of the lowest in the industrial world. In addition, six major taxes have been abolished—national insurance surcharge, investment income surcharge, capital duty, capital transfer tax, development land tax and the composite rate of tax on savings. Next year, stamp duty on share transfers will also be abolished.

We have introduced the independent taxation of husband and wife under which 3 million people will pay less tax, including 1 million elderly couples.

I believe that it is no coincidence that growth in the 1980s was faster than in the 1970s, with lower marginal rates of tax for everyone. The high-rate taxpayers have been paying a greater share of the total. In 1976 the top 10 per cent. of earners paid 35 per cent. of total income tax; last year they paid 42 per cent. The bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers have seen their share of the income tax bill fall from 20 to 15 per cent. Between 1983 and 1989, a net 30,000 professional and managerial people came back into the United Kingdom from abroad.

It is a fallacy to say that high rates of tax create high revenue; they do not. They create jobs for tax avoidance specialists, which was, I confess, one of the only growth areas of the economy between 1974 and 1979.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) will no doubt point out that the overall burden of tax increased slightly by about 1 per cent. in the 1980s.

[Mr. Maples]

However, he will not tell us that there was a public sector borrowing requirement of 5 per cent. of GDP in 1978-79 which no longer exists. If the total tax burden and the PSBR—which is simply deferred tax and imposes burdens on later generations—for 1975-76 are added together, the total burden was 46 per cent. In 1978-79, the Labour Government had managed to reduce it to about 40 per cent. Next year it is forecast to be 38¼ per cent. That is a substantial reduction in the Government's imposition on this and future generations of taxpayers. In addition to doing that, we have succeeded in repaying £30 billion of the national debt, which now stands at 28 per cent. of GDP compared with a terrifying 51 per cent. when we came into office in 1979.

To get some idea of what the Labour party's tax policies might be like if it were in government, it is worth looking back to what they were like when they were in government in the 1970s. If we had taken the tax regime that we inherited in 1978-79 and simply indexed it for inflation, taxpayers would be paying an extra £28 billion in tax this year—more than £1,000 per taxpayer, or £20 a week—and tax would be running at 42¾ per cent. of GDP. That would represent someone on average earnings paying 36 per cent. of his income in tax compared with 33 per cent. now.

It is astonishing that we should be attacked for the slight increase in taxes as a percentage of GDP—not taking account of the PSBR. First, it pretends that the PSBR does not exist and that it is not simply deferred taxation. Secondly, it seems that Labour's answer to what it calls the too-high tax burden is to raise it even further.

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend referred to a clear mathematical calculation of the extra taxes that would be paid now if the Labour party's 1979 taxes had been carried through. Does he agree that that would never have happened? Those penal levels of taxation would have continued to deter effort and invention, resulting in many more wealthy people taking their money abroad. The net effect would have been a reduction in the tax take, rather than the increase which mathematically one would assume.

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend is obviously right. One would not raise tax at 98 per cent. rates, because it is not worth working for that. More and more of my friends were finding that this was an impossible place in which to live and work and that it was pointless to put any effort into doing so.

Mr. Dalyell: Last Tuesday, with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), I attended a seminar at University College London in the Institute of Contemporary History. It was on the Labour Government between 1964 and 1970 and took place in the presence of Sir Alexander Cairncross, who was chief economist, and others.

One of the features of that Government is that there were never more than 700,000 unemployed people. Recently there have been a couple of million or more. It is all very well the hon. Gentleman saying how difficult he found it to work, but under a Labour Government many other people were only too thankful to be in a job.

Mr. Maples: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman raised that point. One of the other unfortunate and uncomfortable facts from the point of view of the Labour party is that unemployment has grown under every Labour Government. It has risen under a good few Conservative Governments, too.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: What about unemployment under this Government?

Mr. Maples: It was much higher than when Labour entered office.

So far, Labour has promised higher spending and higher taxation. Labour cannot promise that there will be higher growth, because its policies will lead in the future, as in the past, to lower growth.

I turn to the visible part of Labour's programme. To pay for Beckett's law—higher pensions and higher child benefit—higher tax rates will go up, we are told, and national insurance contributions will rise. Anyone earning more than £20,300 a year will therefore pay higher national insurance contributions. That may sound a high salary to Opposition Members; if it does, it shows how out of touch they are with what is going on. This year average male earnings will be slightly over £16,000. We are talking, therefore, about someone earning about 25 per cent. more. About one quarter of male workers already earn more than that. We are talking about a quarter of the population being asked to pay more in taxes.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose*——

Mr. Maples: I should like to finish this point about what Beckett's law would cost us.

The promised higher rates would affect anyone earning more than £29,000 a year, which is less than twice average earnings. It is not a very high salary. It includes all Members of Parliament and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate pointed out, a good few people in the middle grades of the public services. That would affect 1·7 million people, and that is merely step one.

Mr. Brown: The Minister has foolishly been reading the Conservative research department's campaign guide. I shall offer him some detailed corrections to it when I make my speech. However, the Minister must not say that the Labour party is proposing to increase the employee's contribution to national insurance because we are proposing nothing of the sort. When he recalls that statement—that we intend to increase the rates, which we do not—he might also remind the House, in all humility, that the Conservative party clagged an extra 2·5 per cent. on employees' contributions to national insurance.

Mr. Maples: Is the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East now telling us that it is not his party's policy to remove the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions?

Mr. Brown: Removing the upper earnings limit is quite different from increasing the rate, as I should have thought the Economic Secretary would know.

Mr. Maples: Another fig leaf comes away, does it not? The marginal rate of tax will be increased by 9 per cent. for anyone earning more than £20,300 a year if there is a Labour Government. That is right, is it not?

Mr. Brown *indicated assent.*

Mr. Maples: That is a quarter of the working population whose marginal rate of tax will be raised from 25 to 34 per cent. if there is a Labour Government. The Opposition told us about this, but they obviously feel uncomfortable even about matters that they have confessed to.

British taxpayers cross the threshold for the top rate of income tax at a much lower level than in most other countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said, we have the second lowest rate of marginal tax of the big seven economies. However, if Labour's rate of 59 per cent. were imposed, it would make it the second highest, pushing it slightly ahead of rates in other big European countries but well above the rate in America.

Mr. Brown: No.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman mutters that that is not true. He can give his own figures, but I usually find that the leading articles in *The Economist* are a pretty good source of information. The article says that these figures "understate Britain's existing tax burden. The truth is that Britain is already a high income tax country. Its executives pay more income tax than most of their foreign counterparts because although the top marginal tax rate is low, the threshold at which they reach that rate . . . is much lower. A married man with two children enters the higher tax bracket at only about twice average earnings compared with four times earnings in America, and more than six times in Japan and the big European economies. Taking America's fatter allowances for mortgage interest relief into account the gap between America and Britain is even wider."

The truth of the matter is that the position would be much worse than it appears on the surface. However, these tax increases are simply to pay for Beckett's law—the two public spending promises that the Opposition have confessed to. We hear their spokesmen announce further public spending increases every day from the Front Bench —"We must spend more on this or that"—and say that the next Labour Government will sort out underfunding of the national health service, will uprate disability benefits and will improve capital spending on schools. There is a raft of promises that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) tries to pretend do not exist. However, we and the public know that they do. It is not possible to pay for them by milking the so-called rich—the 5 per cent. who pay the higher rate of tax.

The matter becomes interesting because the hon. Member for Derby, South, in "On the Record" on 19 May, stated:

"we've certainly said that we have no intention of raising the national insurance contribution rate"—

I think that that was the hon. Gentleman's point—

"or the VAT rate. We don't intend to raise the basic rate of corporation tax either".

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East recently said that there is no intention of raising the capital gains tax rate. I invite my hon. Friends to suggest whether there is any way to raise substantial revenue other than by raising the basic rate of income tax. There is no other way, and of course that is what will happen.

Mr. Brown: The Economic Secretary will have heard the speech—or at least read the press reports of it—made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, who made it clear that our public expenditure pledges were predicated on economic growth.

Mr. Maples: That does not avoid the fact that the basic rate of tax will have to increase. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that anything has ever been made clear by a speech by the Leader of the Opposition, he is obviously capable of translating his speeches in a way that is not available to us.

The Leader of the Labour party has made a series of conflicting statements about whether spending will come from growth, from higher tax or from the rich, and every time he makes a speech his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has to hop up and put it right. It is very entertaining, from our point of view. We hope that the Leader of the Opposition continues the habit. We are getting a stereophonic view of what Labour's tax policy would be. We know that the burden of taxation would increase under Labour, either by bringing more people into tax or by raising one of the taxes that they have pledged to maintain, if they do not intend to raise the basic rate of tax. Perhaps this is the British version of "Read my lips".

The net income of a family consisting of a married man on average male earnings, with a wife and two children, has increased by about £70 a week, in real terms, since 1979. That is one of the benefits of the supply side policies and the lower rates of income tax that we have imposed. That rise of nearly 37 per cent. compares with a rise, under the last Labour Government, of 0·6 per cent., or £1 a week, in the real living standard of a man on average earnings. At half average earnings, the increase has been £33 a week, or 32 per cent., compared with 4 per cent. under the last Labour Government. Even on the lowest decile, the lowest 10 per cent. of male earnings, take-home pay since 1979 has gone up by 15 per cent.

This policy works. It raises people's living standards and raises public spending, with lower taxes and lower borrowing. When we look in the history books, we find that the Labour party's policies did not succeed in doing that in the past, and we do not believe that they will do so in the future.

Mr. Dalyell: At least under the last Labour Government universities, for example, did not have to sell their priceless assets. To repeat a question that I have asked the Treasury, do the Government approve of the universities being forced into such a position that they have to sell their treasures?

Mr. Maples: I dealt with the points raised in the debate by Opposition Members and by my hon. Friends who were here at the start of my speech. Now that the hon. Gentleman is here I shall deal with the points that he raised.

The hon. Gentleman asked about Heveningham hall, responsibility for which falls on the Secretary of State for the Environment. I believe that the hon. Gentleman knows that, so I hope that he will take up that point with my right hon. Friend. As for Mar lodge and the difficulties of valuing ancient woodlands and forests, I shall make sure that his points are passed on to the Minister who is to reply to him next Wednesday. If it is possible to raise that point with the Valuation Office and obtain an answer for him by then, I shall do so. We are grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome of the tax reduction for business gifts to education. We shall certainly want to monitor that and to keep the cost of the operation under review to make sure that it does not become too expensive, but it is not thought that there is any serious danger of its getting out of control.

[Mr. Maples]

As for the universities, everyone in the public sector has to operate on a budget. When the hon. Gentleman's party was in power, it had to impose cash limits. We cannot allow a school, university or health authority that has overspent its budget to say to the Government, "If you don't give us £X million, we'll have to do something that's politically rather unattractive." The hon. Gentleman understands, I am sure, that higher education is not a subject on which I have specialist knowledge. We are all sorry to see treasures such as that sold, but it seems to me that as long as they remain in Scotland, which is an appropriate place for them to be, and as long as they are available for the public to see, no great loss will be incurred.

To return to my point, living standards have consistently risen faster under Conservative Governments. If one looks back not just at the period when this Government and the last Government were in power but at the whole of the post-war period, the real net income of the average family went up, on average, by 0·8 per cent. a year when Labour was in office, a total of 14 per cent. For every year that a Conservative Government were in office, that average family enjoyed a growth in income of 2 per cent.—a total rise of 82 per cent. For every 14 per cent. rise in living standards under Labour Governments there has been an 82 per cent. rise in living standards under Conservative Governments.

A pointer to what Labour really thinks about the basic rate of tax is that it voted against every tax cut that this Government made. Labour now asks the country to believe that it will not increase taxation, except for the two examples already given—the top rate of tax, and the national insurance contributions ceiling. That is incredible to us. I believe that it is incredible to the British public, too. Moreover, I do not think that Labour honestly believes it. What is more, I am certain that most Back-Bench Labour Members of Parliament hope fervently that it is not true. The hon. Member for Leeds, West—the authentic voice of the Labour party—said that he would like people to pay more tax. The Labour party likes to milk people whom it thinks are rich—as far as I can see, anyone earning more than £10,000 a year.

Mr. Battle: I recall that I said that we would prefer a fairer system of tax. Does the Minister agree with that?

Mr. Maples: We think that we have a reasonably fair system of tax. It is monstrously unfair that people should pay 98 per cent. of their income in tax. That is one of the big tax reductions that we made——

Mr. Battle: I did not suggest that.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman said that the Government had favoured the rich in their tax changes. That is bound to happen when correcting a monstrous injustice such as taking 98 per cent. of people's income from them. My hon. Friends understood from his speech that he hopes that the Labour party, if it ever takes office, will raise taxes to increase public spending. That is what he means by a fair tax system.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend confirm that one of the tax changes being made is the abolition of the composite rate of tax for interest paid on bank and building society accounts? That would allow the poor to receive money without the wrong tax being deducted from them.

While my hon. Friend is considering that, will he say —if not now, next week—whether, if clause 50 of the Finance Bill is passed, and if the composite tax rate that has applied for the past four years begins to be undermined, that will expose the Government to judicial review, which may last a further five years?

Mr. Maples: I hope not, but I will think about it.

As we have shown in the past 10 years, a long-term reduction in the tax burden is not incompatible with increases in public spending. We believe that the Government will take the triple crown of higher real expenditure on public services, lower borrowing and lower tax rates. Labour offers only the wooden spoon of higher taxes, higher spending and lower growth.

1.41 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his choice of subject. He follows in the steps of the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), who chose a similar subject on 14 May last year.

I do not know how much direct control the hon. Member for Kensington had over the wording of the motion, but I congratulate him on that, too, because it is a significant advance on last year's motion. I cannot say that I agree with its contents, but it comes closer to addressing the subject of debate than did last year's motion.

The motion makes four points: it congratulates the Government

"on achieving reductions in direct taxation".

The way in which that is phrased is an advance, because, last year, the word "direct" was missing from the self-congratulation on taxation policy. It mentions the

"consequent encouragement of initiative and enterprise"—

I shall mention that later—and

"urges the Government to continue its taxation policies of proven success"—

I assume that that is a reference to the poll tax—and goes on to be rude about the Labour party.

I shall deal with those points in order. The appropriate point to start is the congratulations that are offered to the Government on achieving reductions in direct taxation. It is true that the Government have reduced direct tax rates, particularly, as the Minister boasted, the top rates, but, as almost every hon. Member has said, it has been at a price —an increase in indirect taxation. The primary increases were in value added tax in 1981 and the extra 2·5 per cent. on national insurance rates.

The Government have had the benefit of that extra revenue, which has enabled them to take some 38 per cent. from the British economy—the gross domestic product —since 1981. When Labour left office, the total tax take from the British economy was 34·75 per cent.

We were told about workers being slaves to Her Majesty's Treasury. That argument applies not only to direct taxation but to all taxation, and if anybody has increased the tax burden—and thus, according to Conservative Members, enslaved the British people—it has been the Conservatives during the 1980s. When Conservative Members ask whether the Labour party is

committing itself to reducing the tax burden the answer is no, but when they argue that we shall have to increase it, they forget that they have done precisely that.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman intend to refer to borrowing? Is he aware that borrowing is simply deferred taxation? It is easier to defer and let somebody else pay the tax, as the last Labour Government did. If borrowing were included in his equation, what would be the impact?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman asks an important question. Reference was made during the debate to Lord Barnett's book entitled "Inside the Treasury", in which the noble Lord deals with the question of borrowing. I am a keen student of the book, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). We have taken the lessons contained in it very much to heart and a future Labour Government will not borrow for revenue expenditure, as happened in the past. That mistake was made by the last Labour Government, and it was a mistake which we do not intend to repeat.

In boasting in the motion about their successes in respect of direct taxation, it is understandable that the Government do not point out that the reduction in direct taxation and the increase in moneys available to the Exchequer have been wholly accommodated by the increase in indirect taxation, which has had an effect on the spread of the tax burden.

Data from "Economic Trends" show that in 1988, the poorest retired households—those in the bottom one fifth of the income distribution for pensioners—paid nearly 40 per cent. of their gross incomes in tax. That was a higher burden of tax than that carried by the richest one fifth of non-retired households—in other words, people who are economically active—who paid just 34 per cent. of their incomes in tax. I took that to be the main thrust of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), rather than any call for a dramatic increase in the basic rate of income tax. It is important to realise that that shift in the tax burden has been due almost entirely to the changing rates of VAT.

The Conservative campaign document "Campaign Guide 1991", produced by the Tory research department, contains a number of errors and statements of political wishful thinking rather than of fact. It says, for example, that the Labour party remains

"steeped in the politics of envy."

Nothing could be further from the truth, unless the Conservatives describe a yearning for social justice as envy. Most people in Britain do not see it that way. We wish to redistribute the tax burden and ensure that those on low and average incomes shoulder less of the burden and that those on higher incomes shoulder more of it, not least because they are able to do so.

The Conservative campaign guide goes on to say that most people now pay a smaller percentage of their earnings in income tax and national insurance contributions and that

"the crucial test for most individuals and families is not the balance of the tax system, but their real take-home levels of pay."

That is a gross distortion of the reality facing most of our fellow citizens. The poll tax, VAT and a wide range of other indirect taxes have had a major impact on the burden faced by all households. Such taxes are not as progressive as income tax, so it logically follows that that burden has been carried by the poorer rather than the wealthier citizens.

Mr. Maples *rose*——

Mr. Peter Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall give way to the Minister first and then I promise to give way to the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

Mr. Maples: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House on the question of real take-home pay. The figures that I used—and I expect that they are also used in the campaign guide—are those for real take-home pay after adjustment by the retail prices index, which includes increases in indirect taxation. Therefore, the real increase in take-home pay is calculated after increases in indirect taxation.

Mr. Brown: That money must still be spent on a range of goods including, presumably, mortgages——

Mr. Bottomley: I suspect that the argument between the Minister and the hon. Gentleman will continue and that the Labour party will usually lose it, although the hon. Gentleman puts his case engagingly.

My question is less technical. The hon. Gentleman is right to talk about gross pay and the money that one keeps after taxation, especially direct taxation. I suggest that the people who went for a £500 snack in Park lane—they are all known to be Labour party supporters—should be asked what their gross income was last year and how much they paid in direct taxation. Then, we should have an idea of the effective tax rates of those who would like the Labour party to introduce higher rates not just for them, but for those on much lower incomes and for those who would not dream of paying £500 for a snack on Park lane.

Mr. Brown: I am willing to argue with the Minister about the shift from direct to indirect taxation and the fact that that places a heavier burden on poorer people than on others, but I am afraid that, perhaps for the first time in such a debate, I am unable to help the hon. Member for Eltham. That is not for want of trying, but because I cannot afford to attend dinners that cost £500 a head, as I do not have the necessary resources although I should like to have them. If I did have the resources, I should willingly give them to the Labour party. As for knowing millionaires and other wealthy contributors to our movement, I am grateful that such people exist, but I do not know them personally and know nothing of their affairs. I am sorry that I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. I should like to, but I have no direct responsibility for such matters, as Ministers say and as, I suppose, I must practise saying.

We discussed Labour's proposals for direct taxation and expecially that for a top rate of income tax of 50 per cent. but a higher marginal rate of 59 per cent. when one includes the removal of the ceiling on national insurance contributions. That proposal was denounced because it was said that it did not parallel the practices of our European competitors. Clearly there will be an argument about the figures.

I have a list of the top marginal tax rates of our European neighbours. Those rates include social security taxes. Of course, the structures differ in different countries, but if we include the 9 per cent. marginal adjustment in

[Mr. Brown]

national insurance it is right to include the social security taxes of other countries. If we do so, the figures show that the top marginal tax rate in Austria is 60·35 per cent., in Belgium it is 67·07 per cent., in Denmark it is 68 per cent., and in France it is 65 per cent. Before anybody mentions it, I am aware that France relies more heavily on indirect taxation than on direct taxation. However, the argument is about the rates.

The German system is more like ours. The top marginal rate there is 60·5 per cent., in Greece it is 50 per cent. including 7·5 per cent. for social taxes, in Ireland it is 60·75 per cent. and in Italy it is 6?·9 per cent. Although Japan is not a European country, it is worth pointing out that its top marginal rate including social taxes is 71 per cent. In the Netherlands it is 60 per cent., in Norway 57·8 per cent., in Spain 56 per cent. and in Sweden 50 per cent. The only two European countries where the rate is lower than that which we propose are Portugal, where it is 40 per cent., and Switzerland, where it is 30 per cent. I read those figures into the record because, compared with our European partners, our 50 per cent. plus 9 per cent. national insurance looks reasonable.

We intend to establish a consensus on top-rate taxation. We do not intend to ratchet the figure up. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has made absolutely clear, we expect the 50 per cent. rate to endure. Although I understand why Conservative Members attack us for it, it is the rate which endured under their Government for most of the 1980s. Indeed, when the rate was reduced in 1988, the consequences were not met with universal acclaim.

We have heard the old red or blue herring about cutting the top rates of tax to create more revenue income. That case has often been made and answered. The most significant single reason for an increase in income following a reduction in the top rates of income tax is fiscal drag. I do not have the figures before me, but, from memory, an extra 400,000 or 500,000 people dragged into the top rate tax band creates substantially more income. Since 1979—I have this figure with me—more than 1 million more taxpayers who would otherwise pay basic rate tax have been paying tax at the 40 per cent. rate.

A further argument is that lowering the top rate of income tax encourages those who can affect these matters for themselves to take their remuneration package in income rather than in executive perks. That process was happening anyway, but it has been accelerated by the Government's treatment of the major executive perk, the company car, which is less attractive now than it was. I have no quarrel with the Government about that. Over the past few years we have seen executive pay substantially outstrip the pay of the rest of the work force. It is self-evident that the amount of revenue due to the Exchequer is increased as a result. Nothing that we are suggesting in our modest realignment of the top rate of income tax should affect that unduly.

It is important to set alongside that issue the fact that we are not saying that the 50 per cent. top rate will sit at the current 40 per cent. band. We are saying that it will come into play at a much higher income level. It is important that Conservative Members realise that we seek to introduce a banded system with more than two rates, including a different rate at the higher end——

Ms. Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the virtues that the Government claimed for their cuts in top income tax rates was that they would provide incentives for entrepreneurs and people at the top of the tree? When such people have been asked, for surveys, what their motivation is, they have all said that they wished to build businesses and that money was a factor only at the margin. They are concerned about job satisfaction.

Did not the cuts in the top rates of income tax also feed, if only psychologically, into the Lawson boom and the terrible inflation from which we are now trying to escape?

Mr. Brown: I wholly agree with both points. It is not necessary to look for base motives when examining the remuneration of those who hold significant positions in private and nationalised industries. Such people are highly motivated and I do not think that modest adjustments to their salaries lie at the heart of that motivation. The Conservative party also argues in its campaign document that our increased top rate of tax proposal would cause a damaging brain drain as talented executives flee the country. We heard that argument again today. But I repeat that the top income tax rate in force for most of the years of this Government, until April 1988, was 60 per cent.—one percentage point higher than the top rate that we propose. The *Daily Express*, a source of much wisdom and learning for Tory Members, claims, however, that during the years when the top rate was one percentage point higher than the one we propose there was a net inflow of 30,000 high flyers to this country. The Conservatives seek the credit for that achievement, yet it took place under a higher rate than the one that we propose.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Surely the difference in those days was that this country was leading tax rates down? Rich people had nowhere else to go and they came here because our tax rates were falling. Now they have plenty of other places to go, and average tax rates are far lower than they would be under Labour's proposal.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is one of the very few Conservative Members whom I would employ as a professional adviser had I the resources to do so. I follow his contributions in the Finance Bill Committee and on the Floor of the House with considerable respect. The only possible intellectual argument to justify this seeming anomaly is the one that he has advanced. He says that people came back to Britain because they knew that the Conservative Government would further reduce top rates of tax later on. He says that people had nowhere else to go. I have already read into the record what happens in other countries. The Economic Secretary rightly pointed out that some of their marginal top rates of tax bite at higher levels than they do in the United Kingdom. If they wanted to remain in the first world the only places to which they could go are countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark and France, all of which have higher marginal top rates of taxation than Britain.

Mr. Paice: What about the United States?

Mr. Brown: It is difficult to arrive at a uniform figure for the United States because local income taxes differ from state to state, but the marginal rate in America is 38·65 per cent. That puts that great trading block against the trend of what is happening everywhere else, including Japan, which is a successful competitor of the United States.

The motion deals not just with direct taxation but mentions

"consequent encouragement of initiative and enterprise;".

That has brought us a balance of payments deficit of £13 billion and, in spite of a deep recession, the forecast is for a deficit of £6 billion. In 1983 Britain had its first-ever deficit in manufacturing since the industrial revolution, and the Conservatives have maintained that deficit ever since.

The underlying rate of inflation is 8·7 per cent., although it depends on how one calculates the figure. I think that the Economic Secretary prefers 8·6 per cent. In either case there has been a reduction of only 0·2 per cent. The Government's only way of bearing down on inflation is to bring about a recession. Any fool can bring inflation down by increasing unemployment. The trick is to bear down on inflation while working towards full employment, and Labour is committed to doing that. The Government boast about encouraging initiative and enterprise, but 2·2 million people are unemployed and another 70,000 of our fellow citizens were yesterday added to that total.

Unemployment is still rising. About 3,000 people a day are losing their jobs, yet the Government have the gall to boast about encouraging initiative and enterprise. Making people unemployed is a harsh way to do that. Anyone who takes Conservative philosophy at face value and tries to start a small business would probably first approach a bank. He would quickly find that bank lending rates to small businesses can be as high as 18 per cent. and that a rate of 16 per cent. is common place. That does not encourage initiative and enterprise. The Government's remedy, expressed by the Chancellor, is to call in the bankers and talk to them. That might help, but we have yet to see the fruits of that exercise.

The economy is still suffering from underinvestment. There is a crisis in the national health service, a matter which is debated almost daily in the House, and my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West spoke about the real and growing poverty in inner-city and rural areas.

Ms. Abbott: My hon. Friend has referred to the "encouragement of initiative and enterprise". Instead, we have seen the deskilling of the work force. I grew up in north-west London. In the 1950s and 1960s, there were manufacturing estates, light engineering and light manufacturing all round Park Royal and west London generally. That activity was swept away, to be replaced by warehouses and hypermarkets. The children of men who were skilled tradesmen or craftsmen are offered nothing more by the Government than the opportunity to work in Wimpy bars or in a MacDonald's. One of the Government's priorities has been the deskilling of the British work force.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is right. It is a tragedy that the position of her constituents in Hackney and Stoke Newington is paralleled in the community that I represent on Tyneside. That is perhaps surprising, because Tyneside is a community with traditional engineering and shipbuilding skills. There have been massive redundancies over the past 13 years, yet the employers that remain say that there are skill shortages in traditional areas of employment. At the same time, the waiting list for unskilled labourers at Swan Hunter, for example, is about 2,000 strong. That is the scope of the problem. The solution is clear to everyone who applies common sense to it. The need for training and the repositioning of those who are unemployed seems to be self-evident. Everyone takes that view except, unfortunately, the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) spoke of increasing congestion on our roads and, implicitly, in the railway system. What is the Government's response? Instead of taking the action that my hon. Friend outlined, they freeze British Rail's investment programme. At the same time, we have a continuing economic recession. Do the Government describe that as

"consequent encouragement of initiative and enterprise"?

The Government are kicking the guts out of people who want to show enterprise and initiative. They do so, in effect, by not taking the responsibility that the Labour party confidently asserts is the responsibility of government. The motion continues and urges

"the Government to continue its taxation policies of proven success".

The Government boast about the taxes that they abolished, and the Labour party has no intention of reinstating those forms of taxation when it forms a Government. However, the Government do not talk about the tax that they invented, the poll tax. I understand that it still has its supporters and adherents on the Conservative Benches, from the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), onwards.

Mr. Battle: The Minister suggested that taxes had decreased for everyone. He referred to an average figure and gave the impression that everyone was better off under the Conservative Government. I was surprised that he did not refer to the written question that he answered on 13 May, which makes it plain that a one-wage-earner family with two children aged four years and six years is worse off in real terms than in 1987 at every level of gross earnings up to £170 a week. The position is the same for similar families with three children aged three years, eight years and 11 years. Those families are also worse off. I have referred to the Minister's answer, which came from the Government's tables, yet he tried to fob us off with the average figure. The fact is that the poor have become worse off.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is right. The Economic Secretary has a tendency to try to slide away from his written answers. I remember his telling the House that the growth rate under this Government was 1·75 per cent. when averaged out over their period in office. Today, however, the Minister has tried to kid the House that economic growth has been higher under Conservative Governments than under Labour Governments. In fact, the reverse is the truth.

Mr. Maples: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that the figures are crucially dependent on the dates that are selected and the periods that they embrace. The answer to the written question to which the hon. Member referred was 1·75 per cent. It was a conveniently contrived question to produce exactly that answer. The truth is that the rate of growth under this Government has been considerably higher than under Labour Governments.

Mr. Brown: That is nearer to the truth. These figures depend crucially on the dates that are included in the question. I understand the argument of the Conservative party that there is a residual with which they have to cope

[Mr. Brown]

in the moves from Labour Governments to Conservative Governments. Presumably that also applies when there are moves from Conservative Governments to Labour Governments. If we take the historical periods for both Labour and Conservative Governments, growth rates have been higher under Labour Governments than under recent Conservative Governments. That is why we have asked the relevant questions.

I should be happy for the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to confirm that previous Labour Governments achieved acceptable rates of economic growth that bear comparison with anything that Conservative Governments have done. As Conservative Members like to extrapolate from the past what will happen in the future, it seems reasonable for them to admit that a future Labour Government could expect to attain reasonable rates of economic growth.

Let us move on to the part of the motion which

"urges the Government to continue its taxation policies of proven success".

Clearly, that is a reference not to the poll tax, but presumably to the increase in value added tax. If it is a reference to increases in value added tax so far, the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) pointed us in the direction of future Conservative party policy. She said that, although Labour Members moan about VAT rates, this country has one of the lowest VAT regimes in Europe. What on earth is the point of drawing our attention to that important fact, if it is not to set the scene for increasing the rates of value added tax to bring us further into line with our European partners?

It is clear that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West, who has the affection of many Labour Members, is honestly and perhaps disingenuously pointing the way forward for Conservative taxation strategists. If they wish to bring direct rates down, they will put indirect rates up. That may advantage the better-off, who do not like paying high top rates of taxation, but it will not help——

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brown: Let me finish my point, and I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) sought to raise a point of order.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that many of us have been in the Chamber since the beginning of the debate, but the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has spoken for 40-odd minutes and it looks at though he will continue for some time. Is it in order for Front-Bench spokesmen to speak for so long and not allow those of us representing the far-flung parts of the United Kingdom—further north than Newcastle—the opportunity to put the Scottish view?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member is aware that the Chair has no control or authority over the time that hon. Members seek to speak. I have noted that a number of hon. Members have been in the Chamber throughout the debate, patiently waiting to speak, and I regret that I have not been able to call them.

Mr. Brown: It was my impression that I was winding up the debate following the speech of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, and that we were dividing the time between us. I did not notice any protest from Conservative Members during the Minister's speech. I am never churlish about such matters and if I am allowed, I will happily draw my remarks to a premature conclusion—if, regrettably, to their own disadvantage—so that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is able to put a few remarks of his own on the record, should he catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Among the issues that the hon. Gentleman may wish to discuss are the effects of the Conservative party's taxation policies on the very poorest section of our society who are retired. In 1979, the poorest fifth of pensioners paid 27·9 per cent. of their income in tax. In 1988, that fifth paid 40 per cent. of their income in tax.

The hon. Member for Kensington protested that British executives pay tax of 32 per cent., yet he said nothing about the poorest one fifth of pensioners who pay 40 per cent. from substantially less resources. It is a concomitant of Conservative tax policy that in 1979, the richest one fifth of non-pensioners paid 37·6 per cent. of their income in tax, and in 1988 the same people—individuals who are economically active—paid 33·7 per cent. of their income in tax. If Conservative Members can find the justice in that, I cannot.

On 6 March 1984, the future Economic Secretary, the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), summed up his personal taxation and economic policy with these words:

"A successful man is someone who can earn more than his wife can spend."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1984; Vol. 55, c. 803-4.]

Ms. Abbott: I know the wife of the Economic Secretary, because I worked for her many years ago. She is both an economical and a high-earning lady in her own right. On her behalf, I much resent the tone of the Economic Secretary's remarks.

Mr. Brown: I hope that my hon. Friend will draw the Economic Secretary's remarks to his wife's attention.

Mr. Maples: Just for the record, in case my wife reads it, I should point out that I was not married to her at the time that I made that remark. The second line to the joke is that a successful woman is one who can find such a man.

Mr. Brown: One is tempted to say that one is sorry that the Economic Secretary's wife did not, but although I can be fairly firm with Conservative Members, it is not my intention to wreck their marriages. Instead, I will remind the House of the taxation policy that the hon. Gentleman shared with right hon. and hon. Members on 1 May 1984:

"I did some simple calculations that showed that if one adopted such a broad brush approach—"—

to direct taxation—

"which would obviously be tempered to cope with various problems—a basic rate of tax of 10 per cent. levied up to average earnings, of 20 per cent. to twice average earnings and of 25 per cent. thereafter would yield more revenue than the present income tax system."

Addressing himself to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the hon. Gentleman added:

"I hope that he will consider the theory of removing deductions and lowering the rates when he reforms income tax. The result would be a fairer, simpler and more economically neutral tax system with a basic rate of 10 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1984; Vol. 59, c. 258-59.]

There is the Conservative agenda clearly set out by an hon. Gentleman who, on the basis of that speech, was promoted to the Treasury Bench. We can see in which direction Government policy will go. How high will indirect taxation have to be? And how deep will be the cuts in public sector services to bring about such an economic miracle? The electorate can draw their own conclusions. It is not a question of a secret agenda. It is out in the open, spelt out for us in *Hansard*.

It was my intention to take Conservative Members through some aspects of Labour policy on which their own campaign guide misinforms them, but I would rather allow the hon. Member for Tayside, North participate in the debate—particularly as I can see that that is your personal wish, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I conclude by thanking the Government for having arranged this further training debate for Ministers. It helps to ensure an orderly transfer of power, and I am glad that the Government acknowledge the inevitability of what is to happen. The real difference between the Labour party and the Government is that the Government propose further cuts in direct taxation—they will put that policy to the electorate—but we make no such pledge. We believe that the fruits of economic growth should be spent on much-needed investment in public services. That issue forms the gulf between us. The electorate will have to make up their mind.

Since the Conservative party started its summer assault on the Labour party's economic policies, events in Monmouth and the opinion polls have moved steadily and remorselessly in our favour. I advise the Economic Secretary to quit while he is ahead.

Mr. McMaster: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Conservative Members have been present during the debate. It is clear that they want to speak now rather than earlier so that we do not reach private Member's motion No. 3.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. Hon. Members are waiting to speak on motion No. 1.

2.25 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): What the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) said is humbug. He spoke in the debate. If he wanted to deal with motion No. 3 he should have refrained from speaking and we would have had more time.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) spoke for 45 minutes. What did he tell us? He said that the Labour party proposed a modest realignment. He also said that it would not borrow to pay revenue expenditure and that it is committed to growth and full employment. Those were his words, not mine.

I remind the hon. Gentleman what growth and full employment meant under a Labour Government. For the steel industry, it meant organisations running at massive losses, with the tab picked up by the taxpayer. For the car, coal, aerospace and shipbuilding industries, it meant organisations running at massive losses, with the tab picked up by the taxpayer. That was the Labour Government's record.

The Labour party talks about jobs, but it does not talk about job security or a tax regime that encourages British industries to compete effectively in the world. It has no new ideas; just tinsel dressing.

It is interesting that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) drew attention to the tolls on the Forth road bridge. He did not tell the House that a quarter of those takings cover the cost of employing the collectors. That could be avoided by implementing a system of throwing coins into baskets. The hon. Gentleman is a splendid parliamentarian. He is honourable and has integrity, and I have always respected him. He would not attempt to discuss a tax-raising Scottish assembly, and I understand why.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) said when he introduced this worthwhile debate, massive problems are created if a country gets into a cul-de-sac of taxation that is at a higher level than that of its neighbours. That is what the hon. Member for Linlithgow and I know will happen to the country that we care deeply about—Scotland—if the mad proposal to have a talking-shop in Edinburgh that raises taxes is ever implemented. That has to be linked to the promises that have been made by every Labour Front-Bench spokesman for the spending departments. Every one of them stands up and makes promises about what they will add to expenditure. This morning the shadow Treasury Minister was unable to tell us how that would be paid for. The answer was that it could not be paid for, because the Opposition will not borrow to pay the revenue expenditure; they will merely have modest realignments. However, they will impose upon us in Edinburgh, an assembly with tax-raising powers, so that the Scots will suffer more than anyone else. That will be the obvious outcome of any future Labour Government.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office courteously coming to the House because the Government want to make a statement on the increasingly serious Iraqi nuclear situation, as we understand it from the BBC?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker has not been informed that any statement is to be made.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

HARE COURSING BILL

Order read for consideration (not amended (in the Standing Committee)).

Hon. Members: Object.
To be considered on Friday 21 June.

MENTAL HEALTH (DETENTION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Read the Third time, and passed.

NATIONAL AUDIT (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 July.

TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

FORESTRY COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS (ANIMAL TESTING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

PARISH COUNCILS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

COAL IMPORTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

HOSPITAL SCHOOLS IN LONDON BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

STREET FURNITURE (DESIGN AND PLANNING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Bill not printed. Not moved.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

DANGEROUS WILD ANIMALS ACT 1976 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

HEALTH CARE OF PRISONERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

EDUCATION PROVISION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 June.

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN ACT 1973 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 June.

EDUCATION (SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY) (No. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved—Bill not printed.

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Motion—

That Standing Order No. 102 (European Standing Committees) be further amended as follows:

in paragraph (8), leave out lines 64 to 66 and insert—

'The chairman shall thereupon report to the House any resolution to which the committee has come, or that it has come to no resolution, without any further question being put.'; an

in paragraph (9), line 69, leave out 'a resolution has been reported' and insert 'a report has been made.'.

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): Not moved.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

2.33 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): In July 1985, 18-year-old Anita Behal was one among thousands of British-born Indian girls to visit the Indian subcontinent, in her case for the first time since she was little more than a child. During the course of her stay she met and fell in love with a handsome 24-year-old Mr. Ramesh Kumar. A whirlwind romance ensued and they quickly became engaged.

Inevitable separations, compounded by ill health and other problems, delayed their eventual marriage by four or five years. Therefore, it was not until 1989 that Anita and Ramesh took their place among the 8,000 people whose applications to join their spouses had been turned down by an adjudicator, who doubted the sincerity of the so-called primary purpose of their marriage. Despite this sad placing in the growing statistics of disappointed newly-marrieds, Anita and Ramesh went ahead with their marriage, which took place about 16 months ago. Now, once again, Ramesh has applied to be with his wife and once again he has been consigned to the swelling ranks of the dismissed cases, subject to appeal.

To Ministers and officials, Anita and Ramesh are, and will remain, mere numbers in the unending battle against the unyielding pressure of immigration statistics. To Ministers, this couple are faceless, inanimate statistics on a sheet of cold white paper and evidence of a satisfactory effort to stem the flowing tide of a perpetual immigration problem. But to people who know the likes of Anita and Ramesh in the flesh it is a different matter altogether.

To those who know them better, the Anitas and Rameshes are bewildered young people with hopes, aspirations and plans for a family life. They have faces that light up with smiles, features that darken with disappointment, minds that are bemused by the misconstruction of their motives. They are real people. Policies are about, and must always be about, real people, not about ministerial statistics.

The purpose behind the debate is to try to bridge a gap that has been allowed to come into existence between policies and people, between a concern for the feelings of ordinary people on the one hand and the convenience of Ministers and the machinery of government on the other. It is common ground between parties on both sides of the House that unrestricted immigration cannot be permitted and that there must be curbs on it, but the means, the procedures by which curbs are implemented, are by no means generally accepted. Accountability has been shuffled away from Ministers. We are now at a point at which a two-tier system is in operation. Bureaucrats have been delegated the power to decide and determine, without political supervision, and quasi-judicial arbitrators either rubber-stamp or rescind these decisions. In 1989, for example, a mere 14 per cent. of appeals were allowed.

If this were a process analagous to the way in which we distance the police and the judiciary from the dangers of political interference, it might be unexceptionable, but it is not in any way like that. The fact is that there is no political accountability for anomalies and irregularities. There is no political inclination to examine or to exercise influence where exceptional or compassionate circumstances arise. Let me illustrate by reference to the case of Anita and Ramesh—an almost copybook example of passing the buck. Indeed, it is an enduring and archetypal monument to how a bureaucratic no-man's-land can emerge when politicians turn their backs on responsibility for officialdom.

Having learnt that right of residence had been refused to Ramesh, I sought an early meeting with the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd). It was to no avail. By the middle of January,Ramesh had lodged an appeal, but meanwhile I learnt that Anita's supposedly loveless, impermanent marriage had resulted in her becoming pregnant. That factor was deemed to be inadequate and was also ignored. Early in March, Anita was admitted to hospital in Delhi with a threatened miscarriage linked to the health problems that had dogged her visits to India in earlier days. From all sides she was urged to return to London. Again, I sought permission for Ramesh to be with her. Alas, this is when I first entered the twilight fantasy-like world so vividly portrayed by Franz Kafka. This is when the incredible no-man's-land of the Executive opened up before me.

The Home Office could not help: it was a Foreign Office matter. The Foreign Office could not help, even on compassionate grounds, because the "papers" for an appeal had by this time left Delhi. It was out of their hands; it was a matter for the Lord Chancellor, as his Department was responsible for the independent appellate authority. From further inquiries, I established that that paper travel could take weeks rather than days. In the event, the papers took 50 days—seven weeks—to arrive.

I sought a meeting with the Lord Chancellor, whose private office resisted my request—if the papers were still on their way to the independent appellate authority, the matter was not within the Lord Chancellor's responsibility. But I persisted, and an appointment was granted for two weeks later.

In the meantime, the urgent compassionate question foundered in an administrative vacuum—a sort of limbo existence in which decision or action could not be taken by anyone, anywhere, at any level, for an indeterminate period ahead that might be days but could be weeks. I am happy to say that the crisis sorted itself out, but the bleak, heartless, unsatisfactory anomaly remains.

Throughout this case, there could be no clearer indication, no more eloquent illustration, of ministerial indifference that the absence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary from this debate. As befits one of the most amiable and friendly products of Eton and Oxford, he has never been less than impeccably courteous when I have raised the case with him. Sadly, I must record that his courtesy has been more than surpassed by his readiness to distance himself from the possibilities for constructive intervention.

I must tell the House of one other disturbingly unsatisfactory aspect of the case. From the word go, Anita, with Ramesh, has followed my guidance about immigration procedures punctiliously, painstakingly and to the letter. In the distressing circumstances that I have outlined, the least that I could do was offer to represent Ramesh at his forthcoming appeal. First, however, I felt that I should meet him and satisfy myself of his complete bona fides.

On 16 April, in ample time for the deadline by which he needed to nominate me, I wrote to him in terms that I

[Mr. John Gorst]

hoped would make it clear to the entry clearance officer in Delhi that this would be a purely temporary visit, irrespective of the outcome of any appeal, and that it could, if acceptable, serve a second and compassionate purpose of enabling Ramesh to be present at the birth of his child.

At his request, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary received a copy of the letter. He knew its purpose and I mistakenly assumed that I was receiving his co-operation. He notified me that he would write to me again. Judge, therefore, my surprise when 21 days later a letter from the migration and visa office, 4th floor—written by Miss M.L. Archer, signed somewhat indecipherably by J. Pilmore Bedford, dated 23 May and posted on 4 June, 12 days after it was written—eventually reached me on 5 June.

Judge my disappointment when Miss Archer informed me that Ramesh would not be allowed to come for the birth or to see me, as he might never return to India. I telephoned her, but the only information of substance that I could glean from her was that a Minister should have written a letter to me and that it was a mistake that she had done so.

I tabled a question asking whether Ramesh could have a visa so that I could meet him and whether there was any precedent for preventing Members of Parliament from seeing their constituents' spouses. This Monday, mindful of today's debate, the Minister informed me, cryptically, that he would write to me as soon as possible. Since then, nothing.

Why is the Minister avoiding saying that his office will stop at nothing to ensure that obstacles are put in the way of Ramesh getting the best-informed representation at his appeal? Why must he resort to such specious stratagems? Is it possible that this is merely an extension of the erection of barriers and difficulties that accompanied changes that were made in 1983?

At that time the burden of proof was, for the first time, placed on applicants to prove that entry into the United Kingdom was not the primary purpose of their marriage. With that change, and at a stroke, a foolproof obstacle had been invented. It was a handicap that simple folk would immediately find put them at a disadvantage. Many of those who would be interviewed could clearly be coaxed and beguiled into self-incriminatory statements.

The clever Roedean and Winchester-trained interviewers would thereafter smartly dress up those statements into flaws and discrepancies that disparaged their credibility and for ever ruined their prospect of admission into the United Kingdom. I say for ever because it is clear that once the file has been constructed, it is like a birthmark. It remains like a scar for ever.

As for the Minister's behaviour, I cannot help wondering why he is shirking his responsibility to the House by declining to reply personally to this debate. I have received no indication that pressing ministerial duties are involved in his absence. This is a regrettable and seemingly discourteous way of treating a debate in the House.

As I said, Anita and Ramesh's pleas to be allowed to live together are as yet unresolved. Those problems are embedded in the pipeline awaiting a bureaucratic, paper-based assessment of the genuineness of their marriage, a marriage which will already have produced its firstborn long before the pipeline will have coughed up its judgment.

This afternoon I do not intend to argue the pros and cons of the individual case. My concern is with the procedures that Parliament has sanctioned and the impact that they can have on the likes of this young father and mother-to-be. I am concerned with the anguished traumas that our procedures can induce, with the callousness to which they can subject mystified and confused young couples, with the hypocritical contradictions that they reveal in public statements, and with the way in which we are ducking our international obligations for the sake of purely administrative convenience.

I question the cost of this slow-moving and expensive system. But, more importantly, I question aspects of a more fundamental nature—its morality, its unfairness and whether it is worthy of a country that used to be proud of the essential decency on which its public policies were felt and believed to be based.

What else is wrong with the immigration procedures? To begin with, they breach the assumption enshrined in the European convention on human rights, article 8 of which states:

"Everyone has the right to respect his private and family life".

Article 12 states:

"Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and found a family."

Support for identical sentiments were echoed in an outburst of Victorian-style proportions by the Home Secretary when he was chairman of the party.

"Family values are the key issue of the 1990s"

he thundered and, warming to his theme, declared:

"The erosion of the natural family unit during the past 30 years has created serious consequences for the social and cultural fabric of the nation."

Burning with a mounting 19th century zeal, my right hon. Friend announced with all the flamboyance of a born-again Charles Darwin:

"Nature intended the raising of children to be the work of two people."

To round off his incontrovertible thoughts, my right hon. Friend thundered:

"Not only is it just that fathers should contribute to the upkeep of their children; it is also crucial that we begin to break the culture which views it as acceptable for a man to walk away from the consequences of his own actions".

Let us not, as the Government, walk away from the consequences of our immigration legislation. Let us break the culture that views it as acceptable to sunder new-born marriages and separate fathers from new-born children. In short, let us reflect on how British entry clearing officers, serving at the outposts of the former British empire, are being called on to interpret nobly moral and uplifting sentiments that have been strongly endorsed by the former Prime Minister. She said:

"For our society as a whole, and especially for the children, much depends on the family unit remaining secure and respected."

As I have already said, my former constituent Miss Anita Behal fell in love with young Mr. Ramesh Kumar during a lightning visit to the Indian sub-continent. They married, and that should be the end of their story except for me to add that they lived happily ever after. Sadly, that will not be the case. This unresolved matter is the subject of a second appeal and it is unnecessary for me today to go into the merits of the arguments surrounding it.

However, the procedures and their implications are relevant because they run contrary to our international commitments. We are signatories to the European convention on human rights, and if it is objected that these quasi-legal procedures fall outside the convention because they are not formally part of our legal system, such an argument merely reinforces my point. I say merely that in any proper form, they could not have withstood objective scrutiny by the European Court of Human Rights.

I reassert that the procedures are inconsistent with everything that the Conservative Government have said about the sanctity of family life. They are incompatible with practices within the European Community and within our country. Why should husbands from India but not Indian husbands from Canada or Australia have to go through those procedures? British practice should conform to international practice, especially to European Community rules, but it does not. Under European Community law the husband or wife of a citizen of the Community who is working in another Community country has a right of residence with a European Community spouse. That right terminates only if the marriage is dissolved or if the European Community spouse moves to another country. What is so wrong with that system? Surely it is better than ours.

Not the least of my objections to our immigration procedures is the protracted delay involved. The period of separation necessitated at the outset of a marriage is more likely to result in "intervening dislocation" of a marriage than in "intervening devotion". I regard the procedures as a violation of the institution of marriage, irrespective of any merit that they may have in curtailing immigration.

I reiterate the fact that the rules and procedures are not conducive to sound administration, to individual justice or to human happiness. They involve long delays, deep disappointments and untold resentment. The pernicious test of primary purpose combined with its later concomitant—the notion of "intervening devotion"—are presumptuous concepts. They show no regard for the essentially personal and private nature of marriage. The questions that they necessitate in order to enable a largely value judgment to be made of one of the most intimate personal relationships in a human being's life are at best an invasion of privacy and, at worst, a deeply humiliating affront. These procedures do not lend themselves to amendment or revision. The system should be scrapped. It discredits those who conceived it, it injures those who are forced to submit to it and it shames all those who sustain or operate it.

2.53 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) for the absence of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. He is unavoidably detained and wishes me on his behalf to express his apologies to the House.

I have had the opportunity of looking at the file. I thought that it was prudent to do so before I made a speech. I am indeed struck by the tenacity and vigour with which my hon. Friend has advocated the case of his constituent and her husband. He has written many letters, arranged and had many meetings, given much good advice, offered to represent Mr. Kumar at the appeal debate, as he said, and initiated the debate this afternoon. I recognise that the events so far have been disappointing, but that should not obscure the conclusion that no constituent could have had a case more energetically advocated than this by my hon. Friend.

One of the advantages of having had a look at the papers is that I have been able to judge the degree of involvement of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. He has involved himself with the detail of the case. He called for a full report on the facts and studied it. It would be wrong and unjust to him to say that he has been guilty of ministerial indifference. He has taken a real, personal interest in the matter. Knowing my hon. Friend as I do, and having studied the papers as I have, I simply cannot accept the criticisms that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North has made of him.

It may be helpful if I give the House some details of the entry clearance applications which Mr. Kumar has made over the past five years and how they have been handled. If I then have time, which I fear I will not, I shall say something about the immigration rules.

Mr. Gorst: I have scrupulously avoided going into those details in order not to prejudice the hearing that will subsequently take place. Indeed, I was advised that perhaps the debate should not take place for that reason. Therefore, I am surprised that my hon. and learned Friend should go into such details. Would he reconsider doing so?

Mr. Hogg: I shall not say anything that will prejudice the case. I am surprised that my hon. Friend should think otherwise.

Mr. Kumar first applied for settlement entry clearance, as a male fiancé at the British high commission in New Delhi on 5 March 1986. His sponsor in the United Kingdom was Miss Bahal, now his wife, who is the constituent of my hon. Friend. Because of the very large number of settlement applications handled, the high commission operates a queueing system for interviews, which are an essential part of the entry clearance process in settlement cases. Mr. Kumar was given an interview date of 17 November 1986. Following this interview, the entry clearance officer was unable to make a decision on the evidence available to him. He, therefore, referred the application to the Home Office with the request that that Department arrange for the sponsor to be interviewed and then decide whether entry clearance should be granted. The Home Office refused the application on 15 October 1987, on the ground that the Home Secretary was not satisfied under the immigration rules that it was not the primary purpose of the proposed marriage to gain admission to the United Kingdom. Mr. Kumar exercised his right to appeal against the Home Office decision to an independent adjudicator of the immigration appellate authorities. That appeal was dismissed on 16 June 1989.

It is open to any applicant who has been refused a visa to reapply at any time. Each application is considered on its merits and in accordance with the immigration rules. Mr. Kumar lodged a second settlement application in February 1990, by when he had married the constituent of my hon. Friend. Following a further interview on 14 December 1990 at the high commission in New Delhi, Mr. Kumar's application was again refused, as the entry clearance officer was still not satisfied that it was not the primary purpose of the marriage to gain admission to the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Hogg]

My hon. Friend will recall the meeting that he had with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on 15 January this year, to discuss the refusal of Mr. Kumar's second settlement entry clearance application. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State explained the reasons for the refusal of entry clearance on primary purpose grounds. A number of discrepancies had emerged at the interview about the circumstances in which the couple had first met and about the marriage ceremony. There was also little evidence of intervening devotion between the time of the first and second applications. My hon. Friend explained that an appeal was the correct way forward and that Mrs. Kumar would have the opportunity to address the adjudicator and put forward any points in support of her husband's application. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was satisfied that the entry clearance officer had handled the application correctly and in accordance with the rules.

Mr. Kumar lodged an appeal against this second refusal decision with the High Commission on 22 January 1991. When she received this appeal the entry clearance officer reconsidered the application, taking full account of any new evidence or facts which may have come to light, but she was not persuaded to vary her decision. The entry clearance officer therefore sent the appeal, together with an explanatory statement setting out in full her reasons for refusal, to the independent appellate authority on 7 March 1991. A copy of this statement will be sent to the appellant or to his nominated representative in this country before the appeal hearing, the date and venue for which will be arranged by the appellate authority.

I remind the House that the independent appellate authority, which comes under the aegis of the Lord Chancellor, was set up by Parliament specifically to resolve disputed evidence and claims. It is therefore for the adjudicator to consider the merits of Mr. Kumar's case.

On 9 May 1991, Mr. Kumar lodged a visit visa application to enable him to meet my hon. Friend before the appeal hearing, at which, as my hon. Friend has said, he intends to represent him. In considering Mr. Kumar's application, the entry clearance officer took full account of the fact that Mrs. Kumar is now pregnant, but refused the application because he could not be satisfied, in view of Mr. Kumar's declared intention to settle in this country, that Mr. Kumar was a genuine short-term visitor who would leave the United Kingdom at the end of his permitted stay. He also noted that it is common practice for applicants to represent pregnancy as grounds for compassionate treatment. Although this ground is not ignored, the entry clearance officer is required to consider the application as a whole in the light of the applicant's circumstances and stated future intentions.

As my hon. Friend is aware, it is not a requirement——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at three minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 3 June 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Attorney-General whether he intends to take any action under sections 1 and 2 of the Geneva Conventions Act of 1957 in relation to Iraq's responsibilities under article 4 of the International Red Cross conventions of 1949; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Ministers have stated on a number of occasions that Iraqis bear individual responsibility for grave breaches of the Geneva conventions of 1949. The question of a prosecution within the United Kingdom would arise in practice only if a person against whom sufficient evidence were available should be within the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom courts.

ENVIRONMENT

Residential Property Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis on which he concluded that the average dwelling in England was worth about £80,000; and if he will reconcile the implied £1,500 billion value of the housing stock with the figure of £964·3 billion for the whole of the United Kingdom in 1988, given in table 12.2 of the 1990 edition of the United Kingdom National Accounts.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 15 May by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), at columns *173-74*. The figures in table 12.2 of the 1990 edition of the "United Kingdom National Accounts" were compiled on an entirely different basis.

Community Charge

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update and extend the figures put in the Library on 4 April 1990 (deposit 5906) showing, for each local authority area and giving the assumptions made about equalisation, what level of (i) capital value rates, (ii) council tax and (iii) local income tax would be required in order to raise the same amount of revenue as with *(a)* the 1991-92 community charge, both before and after community charge reduction grant, and *(b)* the 1991-92 community charge, both before and after community charge reduction grant, but on the basis that the community charge was fully operational without any transitional or related elements.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the estimated total annual payment of *(a)* a man on average earnings and *(b)* a woman on average earnings, both living in Kirklees, under a system of local income tax to replace the community charge, based on Kirklees council's current spending and the current level of external support; and what rate of local income tax would be required in Kirklees.

Mr. Portillo: The Government issued on 23 April full information on the illustrative effect on household bills had the council tax been fully in place in 1991-92. If Opposition parties wish to discuss the precise details of their own proposals, we will gladly help to exemplify the effect in each local authority area on a consistent basis.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to speed up the hearing of appeals to the valuations and community charge tribunals.

Mr. Heseltine: Valuation and community charge tribunals are judicially independent bodies, and the speed at which they deal with appeals is primarily a matter for them. I am responsible for the funding of the tribunals in England, and I am satisfied that they have sufficient staff and other resources to deal with their current work load, but I am keeping the matter under review.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of opencast coal planning applications by British Coal that have been refused by the mineral planning authorities, and appeals that have been lodged by his Department; and if he will indicate for each case *(a)* the date of refusal, *(b)* the date of the appeal, *(c)* the date the inspector submitted his report to the Secretary of State, *(d)* the date when he announced his decision and *(e)* whether the appeal was granted or refused.

Mr. Yeo: Information on opencast coal applications refused by the mineral planning authorities is not held centrally. The information on appeals lodged with the Department since 1 March 1984[1] is as follows:

Site	*Date of refusal*	*Date of appeal*	*Date of receipt of report*	*Date of decision*	*Decision*
Barnabas, Derbyshire	[2]—	24 July 1985	14 January 1986	28 February 1986	allowed
Waverley East, Rotherham	6 December 1985	26 January 1986	10 October 1986	19 November 1986	allowed
Bilston, Wolverhampton	13 June 1985	9 August 1985	19 August 1986	11 December 1986	allowed
Kirk, Derbyshire	28 February 1985	16 July 1985	17 October 1986	28 January 1987	dismissed
Streets Lane, Staffordshire	[2]—	19 August 1985	29 September 1986	23 February 1987	allowed
Ryders Hayes, Walsall	10 October 1985	23 December 1985	5 January 1987	23 March 1987	dismissed
High Lane, Staffordshire	25 June 1985	14 August 1985	6 January 1987	31 March 1987	allowed
Rosehill, Durham	21 April 1986	19 May 1986	10 February 1987	8 May 1987	dismissed
Plenmeller, Northumberland	[2]—	4 March 1985	2 February 1987	26 June 1987	allowed
Garnet, Bolton	5 March 1986	25 May 1986	26 May 1987	29 July 1987	allowed

Site	*Date of refusal*	*Date of appeal*	*Date of receipt of report*	*Date of decision*	*Decision*
Bleak House, Staffordshire	11 December 1985	28 January 1986	18 May 1987	13 August 1987	dismissed
Hill Top, Durham	21 April 1986	4 June 1986	2 July 1987	24 August 1987	dismissed
Daisy Hill, Durham	20 May 1986	15 July 1986	17 September 1987	10 November 1987	allowed
Slayley, Derbyshire	24 December 1986	23 January 1987	20 October 1987	14 December 1987	allowed
Billingham, Durham	20 May 1986	23 July 1986	3 November 1987	12 January 1988	dismissed
West Carr, Durham	[2]—	30 July 1986	23 December 1987	17 February 1988	dismissed
Brown Lees, Staffordshire	25 September 1986	26 November 1986	23 December 1987	6 April 1988	allowed
Lomax, Greater Manchester	[2]—	28 November 1986	21 June 1988	17 November 1988	dismissed
Linton Lane, Northumberland	5 January 1988	1 February 1988	20 September 1988	21 December 1988	allowed
Rainge, Derbyshire	[2]—	11 August 1987	1 July 1988	22 December 1988	allowed
Kirk (Revised), Derbyshire	[2]—	1 March 1988	2 March 1989	10 July 1989	allowed
Rockingham, Barnsley	[2]—	24 March 1988	14 June 1989	9 August 1989	allowed
Slayley, Derbyshire[3]	[2]—	27 October 1988	14 June 1989	10 August 1989	allowed
Shilo North, Derbyshire	[2]—	20 June 1988	27 February 1990	14 May 1990	dismissed
Ellerbeck West, Lancashire[4]	16 January 1987	25 March 1987	17 May 1990	28 August 1990	dismissed
Marley Hill, Durham	24 January 1989	21 March 1989	18 June 1990	22 October 1990	dismissed

[1] Information is only available from 1 March 1984 when the British Coal Corporation were required to apply for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1972.
[2] Non determination by mineral planning authority.
[3] Application for the variation of conditions attached to the Secretary of State's decision of 14 December 1987.
[4] Inquiry re-opened.

Royal Parks

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for change in the status or management of the royal parks.

Sir George Young: There are no proposals to change the status of the royal parks. They will continue to be managed by the Secretary of State on behalf of the Crown. However, my right hon. Friend is considering changes in the arrangements for carrying out ground maintenance work including putting the work out to tender.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his intentions for the future upkeep and maintenance of the royal parks.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is considering changes in the arrangements for carrying out ground maintenance work including putting work out to tender.

Rating Appeals

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average time in the United Kingdom generally and in Essex in particular before a rating appeal is heard before a valuation and community charge tribunal.

Mr. Heseltine: Ratepayers have six months to propose to the valuation office any change to an entry in the 1990 non-domestic rating lists. If the matter is not resolved within a further six months of the receipt of such a proposal, it is automatically referred to a valuation and community charge tribunal as an appeal. Tribunals in England have received around 540,000 such appeals of which some 13,000 were in Essex. Most of these were received in February and March this year and some tribunals have already started to list appeals for hearing.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against revaluation remain outstanding before valuations and community charge tribunals.

Mr. Heseltine: Valuation and community charge tribunals in England had outstanding at the end of March 1991 some 530,000 appeals against entries in the 1990 non-domestic rating lists.

Veterinary Premises

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average percentage increase in revaluation of veterinary premises in the south-east of England.

Mr. Heseltine: Information about the effects specifically on veterinary premises of the non-domestic revaluation is not available.

Noise

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to bring forward measures to control and combat neighbourhood noise and to bring English law into line with Scottish law on this.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's policy on noise—including neighbourhood noise—is set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" and reflects much of thinking of the noise review working party that reported last autumn. A number of the working party's recommendations have already been accepted and we are actively working on others. My speech to the Noise Council seminar on 15 May summarised progress.

Some of the main neighbourhood noise measures which we have brought forward are as follows. The duty of local authorities to investigate complaints has been clarified. Also the Government are funding the first pilot neighbourhood noise awareness scheme which has been launched in Forest Hill, Lewisham. Its objective is to encourage the residents of an area to co-operate in agreeing on standards of behaviour to minimise noise annoyance. The Government have also accepted that the noise insulation standards for flat conversions should be as close to new build as practical, and we are also looking into the question of mandatory controls for burglar alarms. A study of levels of amplified music and acceptability to neighbours forms part of the Department's noise research programme.

The statutory control of noise by environmental health officers in Scotland is not dissimilar to that in England and Wales. But there are significant differences in police powers. In Scotland a uniformed officer may request a person to stop making a noise if it is considered to be

giving reasonable cause for annoyance. These powers appear to be infrequently used. Nevertheless, we are looking at the position in Scotland to see if any lessons can be learnt.

Water Connections

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his role under the Water Act 1989 in respect of the discretion which may be exercised by water companies to offer connections at a reduced infrastructure charge in respect of housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has no role. It is for individual companies to decide what charge, if any, to impose in individual cases, subject to complying with section 79 of the Water Act 1989 and the requirements of, and the limits imposed by, condition C of their instruments of appointment.

Meadow Well Estate, Tyneside

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to involve the community of the Meadow Well estate in north Tyneside with the future development of the estate;

(2) what conclusions he has drawn from the feasibility study carried out by residents of the Meadow Well estate in north Tyneside and sent to him in April; and what decisions he intends to take.

Sir George Young: Members of the Department's regional office participate in a multi-agency group, under the aegis of the Tyne and Wear city action team, which is looking at the feasibility of a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of the Meadow Well estate. Consultation with the residents of the estate is an essential feature of the group's work. The report prepared by the residents' working group is an important contribution to the development of an economic and social strategy for the estate and the study team will take it into account in framing its recommendations. The multi-agency group is meeting the Meadow Well action group on 7 June 1991 for a presentation of the Collingwood centre report and to discuss its proposals. North Tyneside borough council is currently carrying out consultation with residents on options for tackling the housing problems of south Meadow Well, as part of the wider strategy.

Water Meters

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is offered by his Department to the construction industry on the siting of water meters in new properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Water (Meters) Regulations 1988 (SI 1988/1048) provide for three possible locations for water meters. It is the responsibility of the water company to determine which location should be used in a particular case.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the breakdown of costs for gipsy sites per pitch and by region throughout England and Wales.

Sir George Young: I will arrange for the information requested for gipsy sites in England to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Gipsy sites in Wales are the responsibility of the Welsh Office.

Burial Site, Kent

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to make his decision on the future of the Anglo-Saxon burial site at Ozengell Grange, Kent, recently the subject of a public inquiry; and whether he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: A public inquiry into an application for scheduled monument consent was held on 23 April; the inspector's report is expected shortly. When it is received, the Secretary of State's decision will be issued as quickly as possible.

Water Services

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to offer advice on charges for water services following the introduction of a return to rateable values of properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: There are no proposals for a return to the rating system. The director general intends to give guidance to companies about methods of charging for water services in the light of the recent consultation exercise.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the final report on the compulsory water metering trials will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply he was given on 11 February, at column 297.

Prime Minister (Car)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Prime Minister is expected to take delivery of his new secure car; and what is its make and colour.

Mr. Yeo: The Government car service vehicles used by the Prime Minister are not being changed at present.

Public Sector Dwellings

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each year from 1979 to 1990 inclusive the number and value of public sector dwellings *(a)* constructed or otherwise acquired and *(b)* sold.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 22 May 1991]:* Figures for completions, construction output and numbers of sales of dwellings by local authorities, new towns and housing associations in England are published in the following departmental publications:

Housing completions 1979 to 1989:

Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-89 (GB), table 6.1.

1990:

Housing and Construction Statistics (GB) December quarter 1990 Part 1, table 1.2.

Sales by local authorities, new towns and housing associations
1979 to 1989:

Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-89 (GB), table 9.6.

1990:

Housing and Construction Statistics (GB) December quarter 1990 Part 2, table 2.12.

Value of construction output
1979 to 1989:

Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-89 (GB), table 1.7.

1990:

Housing and Construction Statistics (GB) December quarter 1990 Part 2, table 2.3.

Copies of these publications are in the Library.

The available information for England on the acquisition of dwellings by local authorities and the value of dwellings sold by local authorities and new towns is as follows. Comparable information on the value of dwellings sold by housing associations is not available.

Undiscounted value of dwellings sold by local authorities and new towns in England 1979-90[1]

£ million

	Local authorities	*New towns*
1979	743	14
1980	1,201	41
1981	1,561	48
1982	3,169	58
1983	2,351	67
1984	2,033	68
1985	2,025	48
1986	2,185	52
1987	2,797	83
1988	4,818	151
1989	5,542	158
[2]1990	3,862	57

[1] Including leases, small transfers to housing associations and dwellings previously municipalised. Excludes large scale block transfers to housing associations.
[2] (provisional).

Acquisitions of dwellings by local authorities in England 1979-90[1]

£ million

	Number	*Cost*
1979	[2]4,793	[2]38
1980	4,440	26
1981	2,263	15
1982	1,912	20
1983	2,397	39
1984	2,935	41
1985	4,034	70
1986	4,852	101
1987	4,928	125
1988	5,600	154
1989	7,870	194
[3]1990	7,279	142

[1] Includes acquisition of dwellings for continued housing use, dwellings acquired under the 'Improvement for Sale Scheme' and since 1985, the repurchase of dwellings under Part XVI of the Housing Act 1985 (Defects).
[2] Figures do not include first quarter when information was not collected.
[3] (provisional).

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations his Department has undertaken into the safety factors arising from the volatility of unleaded petrol; whether they have taken account of the phenomenon of static electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The volatility of unleaded petrol is controlled at the same limit values as leaded petrol by British Standard BS 7070. The flammable nature of petrols, leaded and unleaded, and the phenomenon of static electricity are both taken into account in the procedures and equipment used in the handling and transportation of petrols.

ENERGY

European Energy Charter

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to press for uniform energy taxation policies in the protocols of the European energy charter.

Mr. Wakeham: A key priority for the European energy charter will be the fostering of full and proper market-based pricing for energy throughout Europe, including the removal of price subsidies. This will do much to encourage efficient energy use. Energy taxation should remain a matter for national Governments and Parliaments, although we will be seeking provisions protecting investors against having the results of their investments expropriated by unreasonable fiscal or other measures.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to press for a recognition of the roles of renewable energy and energy conservation in the protocols of the European energy charter.

Mr. Wakeham: If the charter negotiations are successful, we expect that there will be provisions in it relating to new and renewable sources of energy. We will be seeking explicit recognition of the importance of the efficient production, conversion, distribution and use of energy in the charter and relevant protocols.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to propose a non-fossil fuel obligation for inclusion in the European energy charter.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

Renewables Programme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the review of the renewables programme will take place; what will be the terms of reference of the review; and what will be the administrative arrangements for taking it forward.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on 6 February 1991 at column *139*. The terms of reference of the review are currently under consideration and I hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Nuclear Levy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he anticipates a fall in the level of the nuclear levy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The percentage rate of the levy may fluctuate from one year to another, depending largely on whether any correction is needed for past over- or under-recovery of the levy. However, I am confident that the levy rate will follow a downward trend over the next seven years.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department spent £611,000 on management and computer consultancy contracts in 1990-91.

Contracts placed with private sector firms and companies for management and computer consultancies during 1990-91 were:

Consultants and	*Subject*
Oracle UK Ltd.	Various IT consultancy services.
Linear Software	Communications advice.
IPEC	Petrophysical data analysis system.
Consultants	Review of computer facilities.
Price Waterhouse	Work on computer systems.
Price Waterhouse	Software development.
BIS	Communications advice.
BIS	Specification of cabling requirements.
Specialist Services Scotland Ltd.	Software development.
Duhig Berry Ltd.	Computer project management training.
P E International.	Organisation and management effectiveness study into certain aspects of Offshore Supplies Office.
Capita Group.	Advice on contracting out administration of the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme.
Guardian Business Services	Management training.
WDC Ltd.	Management training.
TFC Ltd.	Management training.
Stuart McKechnie Ltd.	Management training.
Jonathon Coates and Associates	Management training.
TDA Consulting Group Ltd.	Management training.
ACT Services	Management training.
BIS Applied Systems Ltd.	Management training.
Career Track International.	Management training.
Laser Computer.	IT training.
Naltona Ltd.	IT training.
Technology Training Centre	IT training.
Hoskyns Group Ltd.	IT training.
Abraham Airey and Associates.	IT training.
CTEC Ltd.	IT training.
Percom Ltd.	IT training.

Oil Well Fires (Kuwait)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of oil well fires in Kuwait which have now been capped; and whether any British company has been involved in a successful capping operation.

Mr. Moynihan: Our sources in Kuwait advise that around 600 oil wells needed to be controlled and that about 110 of these have been capped to date. No United Kingdom company has yet been involved in a well-capping operation. However, the Kuwaiti British Fire Group, a joint venture of AMEC, Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey, has been awarded a contract to undertake a damage assessment survey of a number of wells in northern Kuwait. It is hoped that this will lead to a major contract for the fire group to put out the fires and cap the wells in that part of Kuwait.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, column *374*, what are the interim results of the team of business men he led to Kuwait with expertise in the oil and gas industries.

Mr. Wakeham: The business men who accompanied me on my visit were very pleased to establish or re-establish their contacts in Kuwait. The most significant result has been the award of a contract to the Kuwaiti British Fire Group to undertake a damage assessment survey of a number of wells in the Sabriyah oilfield. It is hoped that this will lead to a major contract for the fire group to put out the fires and cap the wells in that part of Kuwait which could further lead to substantial opportunities for United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the discussions between Kuwaiti authorities and United Kingdom companies offering their services as fire fighters.

Mr. Wakeham: Initial contract confirmation has now been received by the Kuwaiti British Fire Group for the damage assessment survey of a number of wells in northern Kuwait.

Many other companies have had contacts with the Department of Energy through my Offshore Supplies Office. Information and contact names have been provided to the companies where possible.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many Kuwaiti oil wells have been capped since his answer on 13 May, *Official Report*, column *50*.

Mr. Wakeham: In the order of 14 wells have been capped since my answer to the hon. Member's previous question on 13 May.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answers of 13 May, *Official Report*, column

50, and 7 May, *Official Report*, column *374*, what assistance he has given to the Kuwaiti British Fire Group; and what reports he has received from the group.

Mr. Wakeham: I have kept in close direct touch with the Kuwaiti British Fire Group through my recent visit to Kuwait and a joint meeting with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

My Offshore Supplies Office has maintained regular contact with KBFG both on progress of negotiations with the Kuwait Oil Company and in offering general assistance.

The KBFG has now received confirmation of the award of contract which will allow it to start work on the damage assessment phase of the contract on the Sabriyah field. I hope that this will subsequently lead to the award of a second phase contract to the fire group for the extinguishment of fires, well capping and restoration of the field.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Wakeham: An energy manager in the Department's headquarters building and local energy managers in five other premises in which the Department is an occupant are estimated to devote around one third of a man year of effort to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department moved into its new headquarters building during the latter part of 1989. The building's plant and equipment are now in the final stages of being accepted by Property Holdings as working in accordance with the design parameters following a lengthy commissioning period. Property Holdings is aiming to conduct a tender exercise for the award of an energy-inclusive maintenance contract for the building later this year; and an energy audit is expected to form a fundamental part of this exercise.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Wakeham: Information for years from 1978 to 1988-89 is not available. However, the Property Services Agency is estimated to have invested around £1 million in energy efficiency measures in the new headquarters building into which my Department moved in September 1989.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that information for the years from 1978 to 1988-89 is not available. In 1989-90, my Department spent £167,655 on electricity and £18,930 on gas, respectively, £181,067 and £20,444 in 1990-91 money terms, equivalent to 3,292,605 kilowatt hours of electricity and 59,647 therms of gas. In 1990-91, it is estimated that my Department spent £254,357 on electricity and £49,763 on gas equivalent to 4,564,493 kilowatt hours of electricity and 160,128 therms of gas. The area to which these figures relate is 259,683 sq ft for 1989-90 and 242,200 sq ft for 1990-91. The higher consumption in 1990-91 reflects commissioning problems with air-conditioning plant in the Department's new headquarters building, and long working hours in some divisions.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Urban Fund

34. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what level of contribution the Church Commissioners will be making to the Church urban fund.

35. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what grant is to be given by the Church Commissioners to the Church urban fund for 1991-92.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners' board of governors has met to decide recommendations to the annual general meeting for further allocations of income. In the light of the financial problems caused by the recession, but with considerable reluctance, they were unable to recommend an immediate further grant to the Church urban fund. The board has, however, asked that the position be reviewed towards the end of the year. Meanwhile, I understand that the fund's trustees are being advised to maintain its current level of disbursements, from reserves: there should therefore be no effect on the work of the fund in the short term.

The first statutory call on the commissioners' income is for clergy pensions and stipends and grants are committed on an annually recurring basis for these purposes. Other grants, including those to the Church urban fund, have to be voted specifically on each occasion from any surplus funds available at the time. Grants totalling £4 million have been made to the Church urban fund in the past four years in this way.

The substantial administrative support, worth about £300,000 in 1990, which the commissioners give to the fund, will, in any event, continue.

Stipends

36. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church Commissioners have any plans to improve the levels of pay of assistant curates.

Mr. Alison: With effect from 1 April, the commissioners have introduced an improved national pay scale for assistant staff, following a resolution of the General Synod in 1989. The commissioners remain committed to improving the stipends of all parochial clergy as resources allow, but further progress will depend on the giving of Church members.

Urban Churches

37. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what representations the Church Commissioners have received regarding cuts in grants to churches in urban priority areas.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have recently received a number of represention about further grants to the Church urban fund.

My reply to Question 34 on this matter also applies to the grants made by the commissioners direct to dioceses to provide suitable church buildings in priority areas. The commissioners have made grants totalling £8 million for this purpose over the past decade and receive representations from time to time for further grants to be made under this heading.

Church Urban Fund

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what consideration the Church Commissioners have given to the implications for inner city projects of the present proposal to withhold their £1 million contribution to the Church urban fund for 1991.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners' board of governors met on 23 May to decide recommendations to the annual general meeting on 26 June for allocation of income. In the light of the financial problems caused by the recession, but with considerable reluctance, they were unable to recommend an immediate further grant to the Church urban fund. The board has, however, asked that the financial position should be reviewed towards the end of the year. It will consider the matter again at that time.

The commissioners attach great importance to the work of the Church urban fund and were therefore reassured that, if they were unable to make an allocation in 1991, the vice-chairman of the fund nevertheless felt able to recommend to the trustees the maintenance of their grants. There would therefore be no effect on the work of the fund in the short term.

The primary call on the commissioners' income is for clergy pensions and stipends and grants are committed on an annually recurring basis for these purposes. This has never been the case for grants to the Church urban fund. Any grant for this (or for certain other purposes) has to be voted specifically on each occasion from surplus funds (if any) available at the time—a procedure recognised in the fund's own annual reports. Grants totalling £4 million have been made to the Church urban fund in the past four years in this way.

The substantial administrative support (worth about £300,000 in 1990) which the commissioners give to the fund will, in any event, continue.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Residential Private Schools

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many residential private schools catering for the needs of children with educational problems are approved by his Department; if he will list them; how often each of them has been inspected by Her Majesty's inspectorate in the past five years; how many receive pupils from local authorities; and whether he will list their average annual fees.

Mr. Fallon: There are 118 independent residential schools in England approved by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under section 11(3)*(a)* of the Education Act 1981 to cater for children with statements of special educational needs.

The Department issues an annual list of all approved schools, including those which take only day pupils. This list is intended for the guidance of chief education officers. I have sent a copy to my hon. Friend, and a copy has also been placed in the Library.

Information about the frequency of visits by Her Majesty's inspectors to approved independent schools which take boarders is not held centrally or separately. However, Her Majesty's inspectorate aims to inspect all schools which have approval at least once every five years, while those which do not have approval or give cause for concern are visited more frequently.

All approved independent schools receive pupils from local authorities, whether placed by local education authorities or social services departments.

The mean maximum fee charged by approved independent residential schools catering for children with statements of special educational needs was approximately £21,200 as of January 1991. This figure is based on independent school returns for 1991, a small number of which have not yet been received by my Department, and derives from a wide range of schools, some of which provide for 52-week placements.

Books

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what have been the education support grants and other grants for spending on books in each of the past 12 years and the forward plans for the next three; and in what way the need for expenditure on books is accounted for in the rate/revenue support grant.

Mr. Fallon: Education support grants started in 1984-85. They are allocated to local education authorities for a range of spending priorities. ESGs have been available specifically to support expenditure on books and equipment related to the GCSE; and currently ESGs are available to support expenditure on books for the national curriculum. The expenditure supported by these grants has been:

	£ million
GCSE books and equipment:	
1986-87	14·1
1987-88	10·0
1988-89	10·0
National curriculum books:	
1991-92	15·0

The ESG programme is decided each year. The Secretary of State's proposals for 1992-93, announced on 3 May 1991, included support for further expenditure of £15 million on books for the national curriculum.

The Government make assumptions about the appropriate level of education spending, including spending on books and equipment, as part of the annual local authority financing settlement. The revenue support

grant allocated to authorities is not earmarked for particular purposes such as spending on books, and it is therefore for individual LEAs and schools to decide their own spending priorities within the overall resources available.

School Dinners

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of school children received school dinners in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1987 and *(d)* 1990.

Mr. Fallon: The percentage of school children who received school dinners was 64 per cent. in 1979, 51 per cent. in 1983, 50 per cent. in 1987 and 43 per cent. in 1990.

First Aid

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to assist local education authorities to meet their responsibilities for first aid provision in schools and colleges.

Mr. Fallon: Earlier this year, the Department and the Welsh Office issued advice to education authorities following the publication by the Health and Safety Commission of a revised approved code of practice in connection with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. I am placing a copy of the documents in the Library of the House.

Nursery Education

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide an estimate of the revenue costs of making the provision of nursery education in England a statutory responsibility of local authorities.

Mr. Eggar: The cost would depend on the terms of the statutory responsibility imposed. A broad extrapolation from the estimated cost per pupil for all forms of provision made by local education authorities for the under-fives[1] suggests an annual recurrent cost—for full-time provision for all three and four-year-olds in England—of the order of £1·8 billion at 1990-91 prices. In addition there would be a substantial capital cost; and costs would also be incurred in training or retraining the additional teaching and ancillary staff who would be needed.

[1] Tables 11.2 and 11.6, DES Departmental Report "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1991-92 to 1993-94", Cm 1511.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) *Official Report*, 21 May, column *765*, what was the basis of the calculation, including the estimate of the capital cost per full-time nursery place, which he used.

Mr. Eggar: I used the costing per place adopted by the hon. Member when he announced to the press on 15 April his party's proposal to transfer £150 million over three years from the city technology colleges programme to nursery education. Contrary to the hon. Member's statement at the time, only £40 million out of the total —little over quarter—were capital funds potentially available for other uses. These would, therefore, produce about 5,000 part-time nursery places a year—or 50 per authority—as compared with the 20,000 he had envisaged.

Swanscombe School

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give an indication of when he expects to announce his decision with regard to the grant-maintained application by Swanscombe school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering this application, as part of complex set of interrelated GM and section 12 proposals, and hopes to announce his decision soon.

Brighton CTC

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 22 May, on what date Mr. Revere received the commission; and what date it was discovered; on what date it was repaid; and what was the amount.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As noted in the Department's appropriation accounts for 1989-90 and the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on those accounts, a deposit of £250,000 was paid by the Department to the City Technology College Trust on 20 June 1989 and the balance of £2·25 million was paid on 7 September 1989. On 8 December 1989 the CTC Trust informed the Department that, on subsequent checking of the invoices on 6 December, it had noted anomalies in the stamp duty bills and errors in the claim for legal costs. Further inquiries confirmed that South Weald Properties had purchased the site at a price of £2·3 million and transferred it to the trust for £2·5 million. After adjustments to reflect legal costs, a net recovery of £225,600 was remitted to the Department —£224,600 on 13 December 1989 and £999 on 14 June 1990.

Audit Commission

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to involve the Audit Commission in the implementation of his proposals for the development and reorganisation of further and higher education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Audit Commission and Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools had already set in hand plans for a study of aspects of education provision for young people aged between 16 and 19, before my right hon. and learned Friend made his announcement about the reorganisation of further education. We welcome co-operation of this sort. As set out in "Education and Training for the 21st Century" (Cm. 1536 Volume II), the Further Education Council will be required to draw up financial memoranda with the colleges, outlining the general conditions under which funding is provided to them, including the audit arrangements.

Castle Hill School, Ludlow

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many times inspectors from the HMI visited Castle Hill school, Ludlow, during the period between 1981 and 1989.

Mr. Fallon: HMI visited the school 11 times between 1981 and 1989.

University Administration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the number of administrative staff employed in each university and polytechnic in England and Wales; and how much is spent on their salaries, for each of the past five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information on the number of administrative staff employed in each polytechnic in England and Wales and their salaries is not collected centrally.

Information on the number of staff employed in each university is contained in "University Statistics—Volume One—Students and Staff"; details of their salaries is contained in volume 3—"Finance". These volumes are published by the Universities' Statistical Record. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Atkins: Energy management responsibilities form part of the duties of eight officials, with the major co-ordinating role being undertaken by a senior executive officer. The total time devoted to this activity is 0·5 man years per annum.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not available for the period prior to the 1988-89 financial year. For recent years, the position is as follows:

Financial year	*Current prices* £	*1990-91 prices*[1] £
1988-89	[2]28,000	32,093
1989-90	10,000	10,775
1990-91	[3]161,000	161,000

[1] Revalued using the GDP deflators.
[2] Resources provided by the Property Services Agency.
[3] Relates to provision of secondary glazing to mitigate noise pollution from the Channel Tunnel Terminal construction work at Waterloo. Some energy efficiency gains will accrue from the installation of the secondary glazing. A major portion of the cost of the work was provided by British Railways.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Atkins: The PSA was responsible for processing the Department's energy bills until the end of June 1990. Complete data are not therefore available for the period prior to the 1989-90 financial year. Details for 1989-90 are as follows:

	1989-90 prices £	*1990-91 prices* £	*Consumption*
Electricity	269,843	290,757	4,833,851 KWh
Gas	31,771	34,233	96,349 Therms
Oil	50,384	54,289	433,990 Litres
Solid Fuel	nil	nil	nil

The above statistics relate to accommodation totalling 451,513 sq ft.

Some bills relating to energy consumed in the 1990-91 financial year are still outstanding. It is therefore not possible to provide complete statistics for 1990-91 yet.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Atkins: There has been one energy audit conducted in the DES during the last five years. However, energy usage is monitored regularly.

An energy audit of the Department's main headquarters building in London, undertaken in mid-1990, concluded that it was possible to make useful energy savings by installing modern lighting, lighting control sensors, and by fine-tuning boilers, air-conditioning plant and the hot water system. The audit also concluded that capital outlay was not justified on the installation of modern lighting and control sensors because there was insufficient pay-back time left prior to the move of its London headquarters to new premises. The fine-tuning adjustments have all been implemented.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid (International Comparisons)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the per capita amount, in pounds sterling, spent on overseas aid by each member state of the EC, the United States of America, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Japan, in the most recent financial year for which information is available.

Mrs. Chalker: Comparative international data are available only on a calendar year basis. The information for 1989, the latest available year, in pounds sterling per capita is as follows:

EC member countries	
Belgium	43·3
Denmark	111·3
France[1]	80·9
Germany	48·7
Greece	na
Ireland	8·5
Italy	38·3
Luxembourg	na
Netherlands	86·0
Portugal	na
Spain	na
United Kingdom	27·6
Canada	53·9
Japan	44·3
Norway	132·2
Sweden	130·0
United States of America	18·8

[3] France includes aid to DOM/TOM (24·8).
Notes: na – date not available for 1989.
Source: DAC Chairman's Report 1990 (OECD, Paris).

South Africa

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had with the African National Congress about its withdrawal from round table talks with the South African Government and Inkatha.

Mrs. Chalker: We keep in frequent touch, both through our embassy at Cape Town and directly in London, with all the main parties, including the ANC. We shall continue to encourage all parties to seek solutions to South Africa's problems through dialogue.

Somaliland Republic

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what relations Her Majesty's Government have with the newly proclaimed Somaliland Republic.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

WALES

Community Charge

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish tables relating to Wales of community charge levels and reductions and so on, comparable to those provided for England in the answers of 17 April to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, column *184-85*.

Mr. David Hunt: The average reduction in community charges for Wales in 1991-92 resulting from the provisions of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act, before the award of community charge benefit, is £140.

Information about the numbers of charge payers in Wales in receipt of community charge benefit in 1991-92 is not yet available, and it is not possible to estimate the number of charge payers benefiting from reductions of £140.

Estimates of average charges before and after reductions under the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act, and the Welsh community charges reduction scheme, are shown in the following table:

	£
(a) Before Community Charges (General Reduction) Act:	
(i) Average Charge (gross)	261
(ii) Average charge less CCRS	232
(b) After Community Charges (General Reduction) Act:	
(i) Average Charge (gross)	121
(ii) Average charge less CCRS	92

Information about average charges after award of community charge benefit is not yet available.

First Aid

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to assist local education authorities to meet their responsibilities for first aid provision in schools and colleges.

Mr. David Hunt: From time to time, the Welsh Office issues advice and guidance to local education authorities on a range of important safety issues, including the provision of first aid in schools and colleges.

In February this year, the Welsh Office—in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science—issued advice to local education authorities following the publication by the Health and Safety Commission of a revised approved code of practice in connection with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations of 1981. A copy of the code of practice is in the Library of the House.

Farming Statistics

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers, partners, directors and farmworkers were employed on a county-by-county basis in Wales in June 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures from the agricultural census for June 1990 are shown in the following table:

Numbers of farmers and workers employed in agriculture June 1990

	Whole-time			*Part-time*				*All workers (excluding salaried managers)*			
County	*Principal farmers*	*Other partners*	*Total*	*Principal farmers*	*Other partners*	*Total*	*Total farmers and directors*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Salaried managers*
Clwyd	2,425	665	3,090	808	451	1,259	4,349	2,191	456	2,647	58
Dyfed	7,098	1,634	8,732	2,200	985	3,185	11,917	4,769	1,399	6,168	59
Gwent	1,300	269	1,569	523	261	784	2,353	1,105	314	1,419	35
Gwynedd	2,867	574	3,441	1,021	439	1,460	4,901	1,991	315	2,306	44
Mid Glam.	548	128	676	250	112	362	1,038	521	110	631	13
Powys	3,838	1,067	4,905	946	598	1,544	6,449	3,055	467	3,522	44
South Glam.	305	89	394	114	85	199	593	431	127	558	20
West Glam.	486	111	597	241	110	351	948	489	144	633	10
Wales	18,867	4,537	23,404	6,103	3,041	9,144	32,548	14,552	3,332	17,884	283

Source: June agricultural census 1990.
Note: Figures exclude minor holdings not included in the June census.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1988, the Property Services Agency commissioned a consultant engineer to produce an energy survey report on the headquarters Crown buildings in Cathays Park. The report identifies a number of building specific recommendations, which could not readily be summarised, for the DOE (Property Holdings) and my Department to consider in their respective energy efficiency programmes. Additionally, my Department's plans for this year provide for further selected energy surveys at some of our other larger buildings.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. David Hunt: Funding has been specifically earmarked by my Department for investment in improving energy efficiency on the Welsh Office estate only since 1990-91. In that year, the investment was £41,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. David Hunt: Detailed information on energy consumption and costs is available only from 1 April 1990, when my Department assumed responsibility for direct payment of energy bills.

The required information for 1990-91 is given in the following tables:

Welsh Office—Energy Consumption	
Electricity-kwh	8,009,506
Gas-therms	236,033
Liquid fuel-litres	274,223
Solid fuel-tonnes	Nil
Square footage of accommodation	Electricity—742,845 Gas—273,384 Liquid fuel—77,289

Welsh Office—Energy Costs	£
Electricity	412,986
Gas	92,048
Liquid fuel	42,927
Solid fuel	Nil
Total	547,961

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has one designated energy manager, who divides his time equally between energy management and other accommodation duties. He and his support staff devoted 1·35 person years to energy management in 1990-91.

Welsh House Condition Survey

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify the date for the commencement of the 1991 Welsh house condition survey.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is not intended that a full house condition survey should be undertaken in 1991. However, I have it in mind that a smaller survey be conducted in due course to provide an interim indication of development and progress since the last survey in 1986.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many building societies existed (i) in 1985 and (ii) at the latest available date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A total of 167 building societies at end December 1985, as compared with 116 at end May 1991.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *164*, what recent discussions he has had with the Building Societies Association or with individual building societies concerning alterations to the annualised systems of setting changes for mortgage interest charges.

Mr. Maples: We have had a number of recent meetings with the Building Societies Association and individual societies, at which a range of topics relating to housing finance were discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current position with regard to the legal ownership of *(a)* building societies and *(b)* the surpluses of building societies.

Mr. Maples: Building societies are mutual institutions owned by investing and borrowing members. Surpluses made by a society belong to the society. The rules of societies must, inter alia, provide for the entitlement of members to participate in the distribution of any surplus assets after payments to creditors on the winding up, or dissolution by consent, of the society.

National Savings

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in relation to each of the national savings products the criteria he uses in assessing their quality of funding.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The authorities need to ensure that funding is not concentrated in liquid short-term debt since such debt has many of the attributes of money. Debt which can be readily converted into cash to finance private sector consumption could have the same financial effects as printing money to meet the public sector borrowing requirement. Moreover, the authorities do not want to run the risk of unexpectedly having to repay a substantial amount of debt at very short notice. Thus, almost all national savings products either require a period of notice before withdrawal or impose a significant financial penalty for premature withdrawals to encourage long-term holdings.

Taxation (Savings)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans further to reduce the tax liability for people aged over 75 years who have income from savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have no plans to do so at present. People aged 75 and over are already helped by the higher level of age-related allowances extended to them in 1989. They will also have benefited from the abolition in 1984 of the investment income surcharge which weighed especially heavily on those who had saved for their retirement.

Taxpayers

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total number of taxpayers after the Budget changes in 1991-92, giving figures separately for *(a)* those who pay national insurance contributions only on incomes below the income tax threshold, *(b)* basic rate taxpayers with earned income below the NIC upper earnings limit, *(c)* basic rate taxpayers with earned income above the NIC upper earnings limit, *(d)* all basic rate taxpayers, *(e)* higher rate taxpayers with earned income above the NIC upper earnings limit, *(f)* all higher rate taxpayers, and *(g)* all taxpayers.

Mr. Maude: The latest available estimates are as follows:

Taxpaying individuals 1991-92

Millions

	Aged under 65	*Aged 65 and over*	*Total*
Basic rate only	21·5	2·6	24·2
Higher rate	1·5	0·2	1·7
TOTAL	23·1	2·8	25·9

Taxpaying individuals aged under 65

Millions

	No income subject to NIC	*Earnings[1] between LEL and UEL*	*Earnings above UEL*	*Total*
Basic rate only	1·1	18·5	2·0	21·5
Higher rate	—	0·1	1·4	1·5
TOTAL	1·1	18·6	3·4	23·1

[1] Includes earnings from employment or self-employment.

Friendly Societies

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made towards the introduction of legislation based on the Green Paper, "Friendly Societies: a New Framework, January 1990."

Mr. Maples: Preparations for the proposed legislation are well in hand. Instructions have been sent to parliamentary counsel, and drafting of clauses is proceeding. A Bill will be brought forward in a future Session, when the parliamentary timetable permits.

Disposable Income

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide figures for 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985 ranked by equivalised disposable income as defined in table P, page 119 of *Economic Trends* No. 449, March 1991, showing by quintile groups of households *(a)* income tax, *(b)* national insurance contributions and gross rates separately as proportions of gross income and *(b)* VAT and other indirect taxes separately as proportions of disposable income.

Mr. Maples: The figures are given in the table.

Various taxes expressed as percentage of income by quintile groups of households ranked by equivalised disposable income, 1977 to 1985

	1977	*1979*	*1981*	*1983*	*1985*
(a) Items expressed as percentages of gross income					
(i) Income tax as a percentage of gross income:					
Bottom quintile group	9	4	5	5	3
2nd	12	9	9	8	6
3rd	15	13	13	13	11
4th	17	15	16	15	14
Top	18	17	18	18	17
Average over all households	16	14	15	14	13
(ii) Employees' NIC as a percentage of gross income:					
Bottom quintile group	2	1	2	2	2
2nd	4	3	3	4	3
3rd	4	4	4	5	5
4th	4	4	5	6	6
Top	4	3	4	5	5
Average over all households	4	4	4	5	5
(iii) Gross rates as a percentage of gross income:					
Bottom quintile group	6	7	7	7	8
2nd	4	4	5	5	6
3rd	3	3	3	4	4
4th	3	2	3	3	3
Top	2	2	2	2	2
Average over all households	3	3	3	3	4
(b) Items expressed as percentages of disposable income					
(i) VAT as a percentage of disposable income:					
Bottom quintile group	5	5	7	8	8
2nd	4	6	7	7	8
3rd	5	7	7	8	8
4th	5	7	8	8	8
Top	4	6	7	7	7

	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985
Average over all households	5	6	7	7	8
(ii) Other indirect taxes as percentages of disposable income:					
Bottom quintile group	19	16	18	19	18
2nd	16	15	16	16	15
3rd	17	15	16	16	15
4th	15	15	15	15	14
Top	13	13	12	12	11
Average over all households	15	14	15	15	14

Source: CSO, from Family Expenditure Surveys

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent by the Inland Revenue in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the Inland Revenue in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Maude: The amount spent by the Inland Revenue in the financial year 1990-91 on management and computer consultancy contracts excluding hardware and software purchases is estimated to be about £19·2 million.

The Inland Revenue has awarded the following consultancy contracts in 1990-91:

AC Consultancy Services—operational research service.
Alan Gilchrist and Partners—taxation thesaurus.
Audience Selection and Timescales Ltd—customer survey.
B. Duff—advice on accommodation matters.
British Market Research Bureau—customer survey.
Communications Audit—local office communications.
Computer Search and Selection—computer project support.
Computer Sciences Company—computer project support.
CUP—accommodation management.
Design and Control Group of Bristol—energy management.
DP Support Services—computer project support.
EECS and Partners—energy management.
Energy Options Ltd—energy management.
Ernst and Young—development of financial accounting systems.
Enviroplan Ltd—space utilisation.
Fraser Williams—computer project support
Furniture Industry Research Association—furniture design
IBM—computer project support
ICL—computer project support
ICS (Sales) Ltd—computer project support
LBMS Ltd—computer project support
Lorien Technical Services—computer project support
Marriott Consultancy Ltd—recruitment and retention research
MDS Consultants plc—computer project support
MORI—career attitudes survey
Organisation and Systems Innovations Ltd—project support
PA Consulting Group—business systems
Peat Marwick—work measurement
Phillips—communications design
PRAXIS—computer project support
Price Waterhouse—computer project support
Ramsey and Primrose Consulting Engineers—lighting survey
SIGNET—computer project support
Symonds Facilities Management plc—space utilisation
T Bates—problem solving and creativity workshops
The Clifford Talbot Partnership—energy management
The Open College—open learning
Torpy and Partners—energy management
Touche Ross—communications audit
VNG Nationwide—computer project support
World Systems—computer project support

There were no executive agencies within the Department during the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total amount spent by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in the financial year 1990-91 on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases, was £2·51 million.

The management and computer consultancy contracts awarded by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, excluding hardware and software, in 1990-91 were as follows:

SUPPLIER NAME AND PROJECT NAME

Rede Group
Quality Management and Training

Rediffusion Simulation Ltd.
Design Consultancy

ICL
VME Consultancy
ITD Organisation Report
D.I.S.S. Project Services
Senior Management Workshop
Project Brief for LITA Manual

Kermon
Telecoms Consultancy (GTS)

Metron
Capacity Management Consultancy

CCTA
Service and Support Agreements

Oracle Corporation
Network Consultancy

Ranmor
Network Consultancy

PA Consulting Group
Human Resources Consultancy
Cedric II Review

Westwood
BRIT Project

Forvus
Unix Commissioning Survey
Logica (Partnership Agreements)
X400 Telecoms
Tariff Team System Review
LANCE Project
CRAMM Review VAT(PLK) System
Statistical Office 90 Project
Business Analysis
Integrated Tariff Project Data
Modeller and Audit Security Control
London Airport Documentation
London Airport Seizures
HQ Planning Systems
Local Info Technology Help Desk
Personnel System Implementation
VAT Reg/Dereg System Review
VAT PACE Project

VAT II Support
VAT VIVA Project
VAT II VIPPA Project
Quality Assurance on Uniface
Network Cabling HQ Offices
Accommodation Management System
VAT Enforcement Package
Customs Operational Planning
Excise Operational Planning
LIT Dataease Support
Unix System Support

Yale Data BIS (Partnership Agreements)
TAC for Integrated Tariff
Project Management Task Team
VAT II Project Management
Review of VAT System
Management Accounting Related Systems Project
Dept Accounting System Review
Personnel Information System
London Airport Data Comms
London Airport Seizures System
Review of Lees Office Tech'l System
EMAIL Package Evaluation
TAC for SEM Project
Excise/Inland Customs Strategy Implementation
HQ Local Info Tech Strategy
London Overseas Mail Office Review
BT Tonto Replacement Study
HQ Offices Recabling Study
TAC for Tariff Interface
CTQU Project
LIT Computer Infrastructure
Technical Strategy Review
Dun and Bradstreet
  Department Accounting System Support
Peat Marwick McLintock
  Department Accounting System Review
ASL
  Telecoms Consultancy
Octagon
  Telephone Management Initiative
SJB
  Telecoms Consultancy
Bull HN
  Cedric Technical Support
Total Training
  Computer-based Training Package
Ashvent
  Computer-based Training Package
Hunterskil
  Programming Analysis
  Review of Assignment Values
Praxis
  Personnel Technical Consultancy
  HM C&E Scoping Study
  HM C&E Management Consultancy
  HM C&E Technical Review
  HM C&E Personnel Micro Systems
  TUAM System Technical Manual
  HM C&E Enforcement Package Manual
  HM C&E EIS Implementation
  HM C&E EOPS Technical Manual
  HM C&E COPS Technical Manual
  HM C&E LITA Conference
  HM C&E Network Installation LIT
  VAT Enforcement
Datafit
  VAT Enforcement Installation
  Support and Programming
  VAT Reg/Dereg Programming and Review
  Large Trader Control Unit Consultancy and Applications Work
Comshare
  DIS Project
Coopers Lybrand
  TAC for Personnel Info System
  DIS Project
Ernst and Young
  GEMINI Handbook Consultancy
  Personnel Info System
  VAT VIVA Consultancy
  General Consultants
Expertech
  CEDIT/VIVA Consultancy Knowledge
  Engineering Project
MFT Computer Systems
  CTQU Project Support including User Manual Production
University of Bath
  FMI Study
Sybase
  Personnel Information System Support
White Waghorn
  Evaluation of TAWPS including production of Release 2 TAWPS
Touche Ross
  Specification and Development of Operational Planning System
OSI
  CHIEF implementation
AMTEC
  CHIEF Technical Assurance Co-ordination
Model Systems
  CHIEF SSADM Co-ordination

VAT (Charities)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Treasury received in VAT from registered charities in each of the past five years; and how much he expects to receive in the current financial year.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much value added tax was paid by charities in the most recent year available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that detailed information of this sort is not readily available.

Employment Statistics (Doncaster)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons were employed in the civil service in the Doncaster area by Department as at 1 April in each year from 1979 to 1991; and if he will list the reasons for any substantial change in the numbers year on year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total numbers[1] of non-industrial civil servants employed in the Doncaster area at 1 April each year from 1979 to 1990, are as follows:

Year	*total*
1979	1,280
1980	1,240
1981	1,248
1982	1,245
1983	1,196
1984	1,102
1985	1,092
1986	1,274
1987	1,399
1988	1,425
1989	1,520
1990	1,489

Note: No figures are available yet for 1 April 1991.
[1] Full time equivalents—part time staff count as half units.

Details of the numbers of staff in individual departments in the Doncaster area could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

No figures are held centrally of the number of industrial civil servants employed in the Doncaster area.

Savings

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on gross savings and gross indebtedness; and what are the comparable figures for other G7 countries.

Mr. Maples: Data for gross saving in the United Kingdom are published by the CSO in "United Kingdom National Accounts". Data for gross financial assets and liabilities for the United Kingdom, on various sectoral definitions, are published by the CSO in "Financial Statistics". Data for gross saving in the other G7 countries are published by the OECD in "Historical Statistics 1960-69". Data for gross indebtedness, on a comparable basis across the G7 countries, are not available.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in the Treasury and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of persons engaged on energy management in 1990-91 was four. However, this was only part of each of their duties. The total number of man years devoted to energy management in 1991-91 was one third of a man year.

European Community

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* for the European financial year 1990 the gross amounts paid by the United Kingdom to the European Community under the following headings *(a)* VAT-related payments, *(b)* gross domestic product related payments, *(c)* CCT-related payments and *(d)* other payments, noting for each the relevant treaty and United Kingdom statutory basis, together with the gross total, the amount deducted by the Fontainebleau mechanism and the date when that agreement is subject to re-adoption or termination, together with the amounts received from the European Community by the United Kingdom Government or other agencies showing the net payments in £ sterling and percentage of gross and net contribution, respectively, together with any relevant note related to payments for administrative or collection costs.

Mr. Maude: The information requested on the United Kingdom's contribution and receipts during 1990, including abatement, is given in the "Statement on the 1991 Community Budget" (Cm. 1490) published in April 1991. The level and structure of Community revenues are subject to the own resources decision 1988, which includes provision for the United Kingdom's abatement mechanism; parliamentary authority for our contributions is given under the European Communities Act 1972. The Commission is due to report on the operation of the own resources system later this year; any amendment would require unanimous agreement by member states and ratification by national Parliaments.

Outturn information on the contributions of other member states is not available. However, the "Statement on the 1990 Community Budget" (Cm. 1059) estimated the United Kingdom's share of gross contributions after abatement as 15·1 per cent. The Commission does not publish full information on receipts or net balances of other member states. It is not therefore possible to give the United Kingdom's share of net contributions.

Company Cars

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in the United Kingdom in 1990 were taxed on use of company cars; how many claimed tax on cars under schedule D; and how many were liable for car mileage tax under the fixed profit car scheme.

Mr. Maude: It is estimated that, in 1990-91, about 2 million people were taxed on the private use of cars provided by their employers. Approximately the same number claimed tax relief for cars against schedule D income tax liability. A reliable estimate of the number who were liable to tax under the fixed profit car scheme is not available.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from civil service pensioner representatives that uprating of pensions to take account of inflation should be carried out at six-monthly intervals rather than annually; and what is his response and his reasons therefor.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My Department has received no formal representations from groups representing public service or civil service pensioners on this point, although from time to time correspondents suggest such a change. Because of the administrative work involved in uprating public service pensions and social security benefits, these payments are made in arrears.

The uprating in April is based on the movement in prices in the 12 months to the previous September. These pensions are thus fully protected against inflation, and the system fully protects the interests of pensioners. More frequent uprating would not make the system any fairer, but would involve substantial additional administrative cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Freehold Buildings (Depreciation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any of the companies in which he has an equity interest or a golden share do not make it their practice to depreciate freehold buildings.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that all such companies depreciate their freehold buildings, other than investment property which is treated as required by the relevant accounting standard. This information is taken from the latest available annual accounts of British Aerospace plc, British Steel plc, British Telecommunications plc, Cable and Wireless plc and Rolls-Royce plc.

Import Statistics

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage, for the latest available year, of all retail goods, including motor vehicles, sold in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy, were imported.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures are set out as follows and show the proportion of apparent consumption met by imports of consumer goods in 1988:

	Per cent.
Germany	35·5
France	26·7
Italy	26·6

Source: Eurostat.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage, for the latest available year, of all retail goods, including motor vehicles, sold in the EC were imported from outside the Community.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figure in 1987 was 11·4 per cent. (excluding production figures for Luxembourg).

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage, for the latest available year, of all retail goods, including motor vehicles, sold in the United Kingdom was imported.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figure in 1988 was 32·7 per cent.

Liquidations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* companies and *(b)* businesses have gone into (i) liquidation or (ii) been declared bankrupt in the Yorkshire and Humberside region as a whole in each year since 1985; and in which areas of economic activity they were to be found.

Mr. Redwood: The information cannot be provided without disproportionate costs.

Computer Misuse Act

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the study which he has commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte into the workings of the Computer Misuse Act 1990 will be complete; and if he would set out the aims of the study.

Mr. Leigh: The study is expected to be completed by September 1991. Its terms of reference are to:

(a) identify and describe any requirements the police and/or the business community in the United Kingdom may have for expert advice on all aspects of computer misuse;

(b) identify and describe the main sources of advice and expertise on computer misuse that are currently available to the police and the business community in the United Kingdom (whether developed in-house or "bought-in");

(c) assess to what extent their needs are or could be met from current sources;

(d) analyse and, where appropriate, make recommendations on any new mechanism(s) for the provision of expert advice that may be required, having regard to:

present and expected demands for information and advice during the next five years, as knowledge of, and familiarity with, the operation and implementation of the Computer Misuse Act increase;

the need for education and training about computer misuse issues and the implications of the Computer Misuse Act;

(e) assess and report on the extent to which the police and the business community may be prepared to finance any new mechanism(s) that are perceived to be necessary.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what figures Her Majesty's Government have for the number of British plumbers, electricians, engineers and allied trades in the Ahmadi camp.

Mr. Sainsbury: Numbers have varied considerably from around 25 to around 50 but there are currently about 23 people staying at the BRIT camp at Fahaheel comprising carpenters, builders, electricians, telecommunication fitters, machine fitters, interior decorators and project managers.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had from the City Kuwait Group.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend has received a number of verbal and written representations from the City Kuwait Group on financial issues arising from the restoration of Kuwait including advice on how the needs of claimants could be best met under the proposed United Nations Iraq compensation arrangements.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Salaries and Rents

32. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to meet employees and tenants of the Duchy to discuss salaries and rent levels.

Mr. Chris Patten: I discussed rent levels at a recent meeting with the Duchy Council. I next expect to discuss salaries as affecting employees in January 1992.

Visits

33. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his plans to next visit the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans to visit the Duchy estates in the immediate future.

Honour of Tickhill

Mr. Barron: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all manors that have been or are held by the Honour of Tickhill and give their current status.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Honour of Tickhill formed one of the interests Edward III granted by charter dated 25 June 1372 to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

The charter did not specify all the manors included in the grant. It would not be possible, even after extensive research, to list all the manors that have been held by the Honour or to trace their current status.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the representations he has received since 29 November 1990 relating to the payment of compensation to victims of the British nuclear tests at Christmas Island; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations and have nothing to add to the statements that I have previously made.

Fishing Policies

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps better to co-ordinate the policies and spending programmes of the various Departments of state concerned with the fishing industry in England and Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has lead responsibility for United Kingdom fisheries policy in consultation with other Fisheries Ministers.

General Pinochet

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister what procedures Her Majesty's Government have in place in respect of protocol, security, or other considerations, for the reception or treatment of senior Ministers or heads of armed forces of another country arriving in this country on a private visit; how these procedures were applied in the case of General Pinochet's visit of 18 and 19 May; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have no set procedures for private visits to the United Kingdom, although protocol, security and other aspects are considered where necessary. In the case of General Pinochet, apart from arrival and departure, arrangements for his visit were the responsibility of his hosts.

Gas and Oil Policies

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps better to co-ordinate the policies and spending programmes of the various Departments of state concerned with the gas and oil industry in England and Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Energy, which is the lead department for United Kingdom oil and gas, consults on and co-ordinates its policies with other Government Departments as appropriate.

British Service Men (Correspondence)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister when the hon. Member for St. Helens, North can expect to receive a reply to his letters of 1 February, 13 March, and 3 April, on the subject of the death of British service men in the Gulf other than by enemy fire.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman's letter of 1 February as soon as possible. I have no record of having received the hon. Gentleman's letters of 13 March and 3 April.

Journalists (Overseas Visits)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how many accounts have not yet been settled by newspapers which sent journalists on official transport provided for Prime Ministerial visits abroad.

The Prime Minister: As of 3 June 1991, 14 accounts had not been settled.

National Union of Mineworkers' Funds

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what information Her Majesty's Government have made available about NUM funds to Mr. Brian Larkins, sequestrator of Price Waterhouse.

The Prime Minister: The sequestrators were appointed by the court to carry out the order of the court for the sequestration of the funds of the National Union of Mineworkers. The sequestrators requested and obtained from the Government, as well as others, information relevant to the discharge of their duties to the court.

Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what changes he has made in the staffing and working arrangements in Downing street since he became Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave the hon. Member on 28 March 1991 at column *500*.

Business Aviation Policy

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will arrange for the Secretary of State for Defence to consult the Secretary of State for Transport about the implications for the Government's business aviation policy of the Secretary of State for Defence's decision to make the Royal Aeronautical Establishment airfields at Bedford and Farnborough available for disposal.

The Prime Minister: I understand that consultations have taken place between the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport on this matter.

Banking Transactions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations, either formal or informal, have been made by the Irish Government over the alleged surveillance by British electronic listening posts of private Dublin banking transactions.

The Prime Minister: The Government are not aware of any such representations.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will outline the rules which restrict the use of surveillance on private banking transactions in Britain and in the rest of Europe.

The Prime Minister: The interception of communications during the course of their transmission by post or by means of a public telecommunication system is subject to the provisions of the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in the Cabinet Office in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

The Prime Minister: Six energy audits have been carried out in the Cabinet Office in the last five years. The main conclusions for each audit are as follows:

10-12 Downing street
- Installation of:
  - water dams of WC cisterns; high efficiency low energy lamps; low energy garden lighting; and krypton tubes.
- Reduction of electricity supply capacity.

24 Whitehall
- Draught sealing of windows.
- Installation of heat meter.
- Improvement in light switching practice.
- Investigation of ventilation and heating control.

36 Whitehall
- Adjust heating controller.
- Installation of heat meter.
- Reduction of domestic hot water wastage.
- Investigation of ventilation system.

53 Parliament street
- Change to a metered water supply.
- Reduction of electricity supply capacity.
- Adjust settings of thermostatic radiator valves.
- Installation of compact fluorescent tubes.

Murray house
- Change electricity tariff to quarterly billed non-domestic.
- More efficient use of supplementary heaters.
- Replacement of hot water heater.
- Installation of krypton tubes.

Hepburn house
- Change to a metered water supply.
- Improvement in energy management within boiler room.
- Improvements to domestic hot water system.
- Installation of thermostatic radiator valves.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by the Cabinet Office, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

The Prime Minister: The figures requested are available only in cash and 1990-91 money terms and only for the following years:

	Electricity	*Gas*	*Liquid fuel*	*Total of accommodation*[1] *in sq. ft.*
	£	£	£	
1987-88	268,523 [2](330,693)	74,797 [2](92,114)	56,511 [2](69,594)	616,899
1988-89	294,485 [2](337,582)	53,904 [2](61,782)	39,906 [2](44,738)	586,843
1989-90	295,126 [2](317,998)	56,575 [2](60,959)	42,000 [2](45,255)	545,861
1990-91	300,542	58,033	48,988	547,481

[1] As at 30 September of start year.
[2] 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in the Cabinet Office and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office has one part-time energy manager.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of the Cabinet Office in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

The Prime Minister: The only information available relates to 1990-91 when approximately £78,000 was spent on measures aimed at improving energy efficiency in the Cabinet Office. This excludes expenditure on planned maintenance and the use of energy-efficient lighting in refurbishment programmes which is not separately identifiable from other costs.

Council of Europe

Mr. Burns: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has made any changes to the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the 43rd session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: At the request of the Leader of the Opposition the representatives and substitutes for the Labour party on the delegation to the 43rd session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will now be:

The hon. Members for:	*Representatives*
Wentworth	Mr. Hardy
Wallsend	Mr. Garrett
Tooting	Mr. Cox
Liverpool Riverside	Mr. Parry
Wansbeck	Mr. Thompson
Lord Kirkhill	

The hon. Members for:	*Substitutes*
Warley, East	Mr. Faulds
Newham, North West	Mr. Banks
Cunningham, South	Mr. Lambie

The hon. Members for:	*Representatives*
Falkirk, East	Mr. Ewing
Manchester, Central	Mr. Litherland
Don Valley	Mr. Redmond
Newport, East	Mr. Hughes

In addition, I have appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) from the Government Benches as a substitute delegate in succession to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), taking effect from 28 June 1991.

Mr. Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the invitations to official functions at No. 10 Downing street to which Mr. Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi has been invited since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 May 1991]:* Mr. Bedi attended a general reception at No. 10 Downing street on 1 December 1986.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Speeches

45. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the criteria for placing in the Library speeches made by Members of Parliament.

Mr. MacGregor: The texts of non-parliamentary ministerial speeches and of speeches by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are received and filed by the Library as a matter of course, where these are issued by Government Departments or by party headquarters. Texts of speeches by the Leader of the Opposition are normally received from his office in the House.

Non-parliamentary speeches by other Members are sometimes obtained on request for a Member, or in anticipation of demand by Members.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hours in *(a)* Government time, *(b)* official Opposition time, *(c)* Scottish National party time, *(d)* private Members' time and *(e)* statement time have been devoted to matters relating to the Gulf since 15 January.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is as follows:

(a) 6¼ hours;
(b) 6¼ hours;
(c) 3 hours;
(d) 3¼ hours;

and 11¼ hours on private notice questions and statements.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Beef Carcases

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make representations to other EC countries seeking the prosecution of those exporting beef carcases which contain illegal drugs and the withdrawal from those convicted of all rights to export beef.

Mr. Maclean: We will continue to give our full support to any steps taken by the authorities concerned to deal with the illegal use of veterinary medicines in those EC member states where it is found to occur.

Consultation

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a list of those organisations which his Department consults on Government or European Community legislation or directives relating to the horticultural industry.

Mr. Curry: The Department consults a wide range of organisations on a wide range of matters affecting horticulture. In order to save costs and to reduce the burden on these organisations, we consider the need for consultation in each case and consult only those organisations with an interest in the relevant proposal.

Sports Turf Management

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Department contributes towards research into sports turf management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department does not contribute financially towards research into sports turf management. However, ADAS is actively seeking opportunities for commercial research and development with a number of organisations that are involved in this area of work.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the meeting of the Agriculture Council on 21 and 22 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made to the House earlier today.

Dogs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of all dogs imported into the United Kingdom, by breed or description, age and sex for each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not held in the form requested.

Farming Statistics

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers, partners, directors and farmworkers were employed on a county-by-county basis in England in June 1990.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is given in the table. Data are taken from the June 1990 agricultural census and hence exclude estimates for minor holdings not in the annual census.

Distribution of farmers and workers by county
June 1990 census (England)

	Principal farmers or partners	*Other partners or directors*	*Spouses of farmers/partners or directors*	*All other workers*	*Total*
England					
Avon	1,619	577	559	3,837	6,592
Bedfordshire	995	454	360	2,015	3,824
Berkshire	643	219	221	1,529	2,612
Buckinghamshire	1,529	625	471	2,460	5,085
Cambridgeshire	2,955	1,371	1,602	7,345	12,673
Cheshire	3,537	1,326	1,409	5,111	11,383
Cleveland	364	154	118	477	1,113
Cornwall	5,771	1,790	2,408	5,366	15,335
Cumbria	5,324	2,235	2,389	4,723	14,671
Derbyshire	3,071	1,221	1,112	3,331	8,735
Devon	9,175	2,897	3,920	9,090	25,082
Dorset	2,438	932	990	4,269	8,629
Durham	1,832	735	700	1,984	5,251
East Sussex	1,775	587	671	3,664	6,697
Essex	2,844	1,437	1,036	7,145	12,462
Gloucestershire	2,608	920	952	4,107	8,587
Greater London	346	174	138	1,192	1,850
Greater Manchester	1,208	497	435	1,484	3,624
Hampshire	2,374	903	848	6,929	11,054
Hereford and Worcester	5,479	2,050	2,079	9,922	19,530
Hertfordshire	974	426	339	2,050	3,789
Humberside	2,918	1,566	853	6,497	11,834
Isle of Wight	419	144	172	792	1,527
Isles of Scilly	55	8	29	77	169
Kent	3,336	1,366	1,192	16,393	22,287
Lancashire	4,545	2,010	1,938	7,203	15,696
Leicestershire	2,193	969	721	3,226	7,109
Lincolnshire	4,835	2,463	1,729	13,252	22,279
Merseyside	407	178	160	871	1,616
Norfolk	4,075	1,700	1,271	13,580	20,626
North Yorkshire	7,287	3,214	2,590	10,836	23,927
Northamptonshire	1,586	745	513	2,365	5,209
Northumberland	1,989	934	677	2,911	6,511
Nottinghamshire	1,573	801	500	3,153	6,027
Oxfordshire	1,654	684	566	3,491	6,395
Shropshire	4,057	1,578	1,642	5,695	12,972
Somerset	4,697	1,664	1,898	6,604	14,863
South Yorkshire	1,183	530	412	1,572	3,697
Staffordshire	3,652	1,339	1,440	5,012	11,443
Suffolk	2,823	1,335	956	7,817	12,931
Surrey	1,360	411	514	3,701	5,986
Tyne and Wear	229	91	72	391	783
Warwickshire	1,931	770	665	3,043	6,409
West Midlands	368	152	134	752	1,406
West Sussex	1,735	632	670	6,523	9,560
West Yorkshire	2,488	904	845	3,066	7,303
Wiltshire	2,362	921	817	4,533	8,633

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount spent by the intervention board in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the intervention board in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Curry: This is a matter for the chief executive, who will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Curry: Our expenditure on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases in the 1990-91 financial year was £4,556,695. A list of contracts awarded in 1990-91 is as follows:

Management consultancy contracts awarded in 1990-91

COMPANY AND CONTRACT

Touche Ross—Dairy Crest Foods: Monitoring of the agreement between MAFF, the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trades Federation

KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock—Training needs analysis
Training Review
Human resource development project
Assistance with efficiency scrutiny on staff attitudes

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte—Regional structure review: administration of grants and subsidies

IT computer consultancy contracts awarded in 1990-91

COMPANY AND CONTRACT

Asterisk Computer Services—Development of food science sub-strategy

Mouncey and Partners—Support on business analysis

PA Consulting Services—Support on business analysis

University of Bristol—Development of national food survey

FI Group Ltd.—Development of national food survey

Ernst and Young—Support for the accounts payable/ purchase order project

Touche Ross—CRAMM security review

Softlab—CRAMM security review

Asterisk Computer Services—Development of R and D system for chief scientists group

TRIAD Special Systems—Design of HECTOR personnel system

Ingres—Conversion of applications programs for fisheries

Kinderquest Ltd.—Support on the child care nursery project

D M Shaw—Support of the post implementation review

IBM (UK) Ltd.—Operations productivity study

TRIAD Special Systems—Development of applications software for pesticides safety division

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte—Video conferencing

EOSYS—Development of local area network strategy

Grafton—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

Asterisk Computer Services—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

TRIAD Special Systems—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

Tech Op—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

Exeter University—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

PA Consulting Services—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

Price Waterhouse—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

Intergraph—Development of ADAS sub-strategy

TRIAD Special Systems—Support for regional administration project

Asterisk Computer Services—Support to regional administration project

Quanta Learning Systems—Support to regional administration project

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his earlier question on 25 June 1990 at col. *29*. In the 1990-91 financial year £231,038 was spent on specific energy saving measures by this Department. This sum does not reflect the cost of other works which have led to energy saving alongside other benefits but in which this element cannot be specifically identified. Nor does it include expenditure undertaken by the Property Services Agency. Figures for years prior to 1989-90 are not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to his earlier question on 5 June 1990 at col. *503*. The information requested is not yet available for the 1990-91 financial year. The area of accommodation occupied by this Department at the end of 1990 was 595,665 sq m, that is, about 6·4 million sq ft.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his earlier question on 5 June 1990 at column *503*. Since then, five further energy, audits have been carried out. In London the consultants report recommended changes to tariffs, improvements to heating controls and changes to time switches, metering arrangements and electrical capacities. At Slough recommendations centred on improvements to lighting, radiators and windows. In the Ministry's South Eastern region an audit proposed draught proofing and the insulation of plant and water heaters. In Midlands and Western region two audits were carried out which recommended tariff and time clock changes, modifications to and installation of thermostats, time switches and control systems, boiler adjustments and fitting energy efficient lighting.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Curry: The position in the Department has not changed since the answer given to the hon. Member on 5 June 1990 at column *503*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hostages

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information he has concerning the whereabouts of John McCarthy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We receive a number of reports on the whereabouts of John McCarthy, Terry Waite, and Jack Mann but we have no definite information as to their exact whereabouts at any particular time. We wish these and all other hostages to be released as soon as possible.

Ascension Island

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *459*, if he will enlarge his review of the problem of feral cats on Ascension Island to include that of rats.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Non-Governmental Organisations' Forum for Nature Conservation in the United Kingdom dependent territories is planning to assess the impact of feral cats and rats on Ascension Island's bird life. We look forward to studying its conclusions.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the rates of pay for make-work on St. Helena and the relevant rate of inflation for the last 10 years.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The weekly wage for workers engaged on the three-day work scheme is £22·86. The tables below record the percentage change in wages paid under the three-day work scheme since annual reviews were introduced on 1 April 1988. The retail prices index is given since 1981.

Date of review of three-day work scheme wage and percentage change from previous year

	per cent.
1 April 1988	4
1 April 1989	3
1 April 1990	3
1 April 1991	0

Annual percentage change in retail price index from previous year

Year[1]	*Per cent.*
1981	17·3
1982	12·2
1983	8·7
1984	9·5
1985	4·7
1986	−2·0
1987	4·2
1988	3·7
1989	4·9
1990	2·2

[1]All figures based on 4th quarter.

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 3 June and Ministers are likely to discuss VAT and excise rates, in particular VAT special schemes for mail order and exempt bodies. Discussion on technical systems is not expected.

The Telecommunications Council will meet on 3 June and Ministers will consider a proposal for a decision to establish the second phase of the TEDIS programme, (trade, electronics data interchange system). The programme proposed includes actions on standardisation, legal aspects and security of EDI measures. It is expected that a statement will be made outlining the progress of discussions with interested parties on a memorandum of agreement for the promotion of the MAC technology standards for satellite broadcast. Ministers will also re-examine proposals for a Council directive on frequencies for the introduction of cordless digital telecommunications (DECT). There will also be a proposal for a Council recommendation on the co-ordinated introduction of cordless digital telecommunications. A common position has been reached on these measures, which are for adoption at this meeting. Ministers will consider Commission reports, on the results of the public consultation on the Green Paper on satellite communications, progress on a Green Paper on postal services which has been in preparation since September 1989 and a draft proposal for discussion on the proposed directive on the adoption of standardised international area codes.

The Health Council will meet on 4 June and Ministers will discuss the Commission's proposals for amending the existing directive on the labelling of cigarette packets to include other tobacco products, (this amendment also includes a ban on the marketing of oral snuff), a proposal for a programme of action against AIDS, a declaration on the use of drugs in sport, actions for the reduction of drug abuse and a report on the Europe against cancer programme. Statements are expected to be made by the Commission on progress on the establishment of a public health committee, the European year of nutrition and co-operation between the EC and World Health Organisation.

The Culture Council will meet on 7 June and Ministers will consider a draft resolution on the development of theatre in Europe, training of arts administrators, temporary entry into the United States for European artists, and draft conclusions on copyright and neighbouring rights. Ministers will also consider a progress report on the implementation of the resolutions of 18 May 1989 concerning the promotions of books and reading, and the nomination of Navplion as European city of culture for 1997. Ministers will discuss the protection of national art treasures under the single market post-1992 and a Commission report on priority projects in the cultural field.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 10 June and Ministers will discuss G24 assistance to eastern Europe and European investment bank lending outside the Community with a view to examining the possibility of extending EIB operations to other countries and regions.

Ministers will also consider the proposal on passenger baggage and possibly will continue discussing the abolition of fiscal frontiers. A directive on money laundering may be formally adopted. The EIB governors (12 Finance Ministers) will be having their annual meeting in the morning on 10 June. In the afternoon, the Ministerial meeting of the inter-governmental Conference on economic and monetary union will hold a discussion on a draft report by the Presidency for the European Council. On 11 June, the ministerial inter-governmentalconference will hold an inter-institutional meeting with the European Parliament.

The Environment Council will meet on 13 and 14 June and Ministers will consider proposals for regulations on the importation of certain furs and the northern seas action programme (NORSPA) and the proposed directive on nitrate. Ministers will discuss proposals for a directive on habitats and its associated regulation on action relating to the environment (ACNAT), regulations concerning environmental labelling, and an environment fund (LIFE).

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 17 and 18 June. Ministers will prepare for the European Council on 28 and 29 June and review progress in the EC/EFTA negotiations on a European economic area in preparation for a joint meeting of EC/EFTA Ministers in the margins of the FAC. Ministers may consider the development of relations between the Community and dependent territories of member states and are likely to discuss political developments in Albania and EC/Albania relations. Ministers may also discuss the question of non-European participation in the European energy charter and the future integration of the Canaries, Madeira and Azores into the EC. There will also be a ministerial session of the inter-government conference on political union on 17 and 18 June.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 18 and 19 June and Ministers will discuss a number of important issues including insurance company accounts, the baggage regulation, public procurement, the Intrastat regulations and the draft Council regulation on trans-European networks.

The Transport Council will meet on 20 and 21 June and Ministers will discuss, and possibly adopt, proposals on the mutual recognition of cockpit crew licences, technical harmonisation of aviation requirements, harmonised driving licences, roadworthiness tests for cars, and the extension of inland waterway cabotage. Agreement may also be reached on proposals for the development of Community railways, public service contracts and the Loran C radionavigation system. Ministers are likely to spend some considerable time on the problem of third country transit, and may also discuss bus and coach liberalisation and road safety (including seat belt wearing).

The Labour and Social Affairs Council will meet on 25 and 26 June and Ministers are likely to discuss the proposed directives on medical assistance on board ships, health and safety on construction sites, proof of employment contract, protection of pregnant workers, protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos, atypical work (article 118A), and, possibly, working time. Ministers will also consider a report on the free movement of workers between Spain and Portugal and other member states. The decisions on the PETRA youth training programme and on the European year of health and safety are also likely to be discussed. The second day of the Council is expected to focus particularly on youth issues: items which may be included are the youth for Europe programme and a resolution on priority measures for young people.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 25 and 26 June and Ministers will discuss health conditions for the production and placing on the market of fishery products, and live bivalve molluscs, veterinary checks on animals entering the Community from third countries, health rules for the production and placing on the market of fresh meat, certification aspects of food quality and geographical indications, and EC-accepted plant protection products. Ministers may also continue discussions on the 1991 agriculture price-fixing proposals and organic production of agricultural products.

The European Council will meet in Luxembourg on 28 and 29 June. Heads of Government will discuss progress in the inter-governmental conferences on political and economic and monetary union. There is likely to be discussion on the single market, GATT, and a range of international and EC external issues.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he intends to take any action in relation to the Kurdish people in Iraq under article 4 of the International Red Cross conventions of 1949; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has made representations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as to the application of article 4 of the International Red Cross conventions of 1949 to the Kurdish people in Iraq; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has made representations to the International Red Cross in relation to its responsibilities to the Kurdish people in Iraq under article 4 of the International Red Cross conventions of 1949; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Article 4 of each of the four Geneva conventions merely defines the categories of persons covered by the conventions.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the provision of United Kingdom arms and ammunition to Kurdish fighters inside Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not supplying any arms and ammunition to the Kurds. Any reports that we are doing so are wrong.

Fish Stocks (South Georgia)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the decline in fish stocks off South Georgia; what assessment he has made of the need for remedial measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A research cruise was conducted in January this year by British Antarctic Survey and Imperial college, London, on behalf of the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands. The results of this research are still being analysed, but both this and reports of commercial fishing in the region suggest that stocks of krill and mackerel icefish are substantially lower than last

year. Conservation outside the 12- mile territorial limit is the responsibility of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, which will discuss the subject thoroughly and recommend conservation measures at its next meeting in Hobart in October this year. The United Kingdom takes its conservation responsibilities seriously and will take any measures necessary to conserve fish stocks in the region.

Guyana

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Guyana concerning the conduct of elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 29 October 1990 at c. *391*.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: the total spent by the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on both management and computer consultancy contracts in the 1990-91 financial year was £3,068,317.

Individual contracts awarded during the year were:

Management consultancies:

AID WING

Alex Sutherland
Review of procedures manual

Mr. Fowler
Review of personnel policy

DIPLOMATIC WING

M. Armstrong and Associates
Personnel policy

Coopers and Lybrand
Personnel policy

Peat Marwick
Training scrutiny support

Pergamon Technical Services
Revision of diplomatic service procedure

Computer consultancies:

AID WING

BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
Requirements analysis

Enever Systems
Systems development

Exec Systems Ltd.
Systems development

Orac Information Systems Ltd.
Data transfer

Price Waterhouse
Requirements analysis

DIPLOMATIC WING

Admiral Computing Ltd.
Scoping study

Admiral Management Services
Project management, systems control

BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
Systems development

BRS (Europe) Ltd.
System repair, training

Casu Electronics Ltd.
Training, maintenance

CCTA
Systems maintenance

Churchill Software Ltd.
Training

Computer Learning Centre
Training

Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte
Systems reports

Database Systems
Systems development

Digitus
Systems development

Duhig Berry Ltd.
Requirements analysis

Ernst & Young Ltd.
Systems review

Express Computers Ltd.
Systems Development

IBM (UK) Ltd.
Systems Development

Infosound Ltd.
Training

Infotach Marketing
Systems support and development

James Duncan & Associates
Training

Kinesis Computing Ltd.
Training

Logica UK Ltd.
Cabling standards study, systems development

Management Systems Development
Systems support and development

Mega Consultancy
Buildings infrastructure study

NCR Ltd.
Work profiles

Praxis Systems PLC
Requirements analysis

Price Waterhouse
Programming

Roche Consulting PLC
Capacity planning study

Softlab Ltd.
Risk analysis

Systems Assurance Ltd.
Strategy support

Technological Solutions Ltd.
Systems maintenance

The Instruction Set
Software support, data transfer, systems development, requirement analysis

Towngate Software Ltd.
Training

Transaction Point Ltd.
Project support

Wang UK Ltd.
Training

General Pinochet

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he received concerning the visit to the United Kingdom of General Augusto Pinochet; and what representatives of Her Majesty's Government met him during his visit.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have received a number of representations, mainly letters from Members of Parliament and from the general public. General Pinochet was not met by representatives of Her Majesty's Government.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government's representatives at the UN in supporting a referendum in the western Sahara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Together with the other permanent members of the Security Council, we approved the secretary-general's plan on 22 April, subsequently endorsed by the Security Council on 29 April. We shall continue to do everything possible to assist the secretary-general. His plan is the best way to bring this dispute to an end.

Soviet Exiles (Visas)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Soviet Government about the number of Soviet exiles and their families who are being denied visas to return to the Soviet Union either as visitors or as representatives of non-governmental organisations to attend conferences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. We are not aware of any Soviet exiles living in Britain who have been denied visas to visit the Soviet Union. If my hon. Friend has any specific cases in mind, we should be happy to look into them.

Baltic States

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will recommend at the forthcoming Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Foreign Ministers meeting in Berlin that the declaration of independence by the Baltic states be referred to the disputes settlement mechanism agreed to at Valletta; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The dispute settlement mechanism, whose provisions were agreed by experts from CSCE states at Valletta in February, can as currently constituted only address disputes between CSCE participating states. All participants in the Valletta meeting, however, agreed 10 principles describing how parties should behave in settling their disputes: it is open for the Soviet authorities and the Baltic republics to agree to apply these principles. We welcome the fact that discussions are now taking place between the Baltic and Soviet leaderships.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply on the non-proliferation treaty to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), *Official Report*, 17 May, column *304*, whether the review of the NPT regime is carried out in collaboration with other Governments; and what resources are committed by Her Majesty's Government to conduct the review.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We attach the highest priority to the success of the NPT regime and remain in close touch with our allies and partners on all questions relating to it. We devote considerable resources to the regime. The relevant section of non-proliferation and defence department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office takes the lead, working in close co-operation with, among others, departments in the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Energy.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

14. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the level of intended investment by British Rail for extra regional passenger and freight traffic consequent upon opening the channel tunnel.

Mr. McLoughlin: British Rail is planning to invest more than £300 million for international freight services. It expects regions outside London and the south east to account for about 70 per cent. of its freight business through the tunnel. It has yet to submit investment proposals for regional passenger services.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to meet Ove Arup to discuss the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed to a request from my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) for a meeting with Ove Arup to discuss its rail link proposal.

17. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision on the route of the channel tunnel high speed rail link.

Mr. Freeman: I refer to the answer that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock).

24. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to hold meetings with representatives of the channel tunnel consortium to discuss relevant matters of transport co-ordination.

Mr. Freeman: I meet representatives of Eurotunnel from time to time to discuss issues of common concern.

25. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the local authorities in London regarding the high speed rail link; and whether he has any plans for an early meeting with them.

Mr. Freeman: On 4 February, representatives of the London borough of Newham gave me a presentation of their proposed route for the rail link into Stratford. I have no plans at present for further meetings with Newham or other London local authorities.

InterCity Services

15. **Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there has been an increase or a reduction in the services provided by InterCity as against the performance objectives set in the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the future investment proposals of British Rail in this respect.

Mr. Freeman: Improving services remains one of InterCity's key objectives. InterCity fell short of its punctuality and reliability targets in the last two years. The electrification of the east coast main line, which will be completed next month, will bring a significant improvement. It will in turn allow InterCity to redeploy trains and resources to other routes. I am sure that improved quality of service will continue to be a part of InterCity's investment proposals wherever it is commercially justified.

Danbury (By-pass)

16. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit Danbury to assess the need for a bypass.

Mr. Chope: I am afraid that this is not my responsibility as the A414 is a local road. Essex county council, the local highway authority, must decide whether a bypass is needed.

Crystal Palace (Underground)

18. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to authorise expenditure on an extension of underground railways to Crystal Palace.

Mr. Freeman: My predecessor asked London Transport to consider, among other proposals arising from the London assessment studies, the case for a southern extension of the Northern line to Streatham and, possibly, on to Crystal Palace. That consideration is not yet complete. The question of authorising expenditure does not therefore arise.

Isle of Wight

19. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received for the Isle of Wight to receive primary route status.

Mr. Chope: Following the review of the primary route network in 1985 the Isle of Wight made a separate application later that year, and subsequently a further application in 1988, for some towns on the island to become primary route destinations. After careful consideration, both applications were rejected.

Road Safety

20. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further proposals he has to improve road safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have today launched a national publicity campaign on compulsory seat belt wearing by rear seat adult passengers which comes into force on 1 July.

Our proposals for reformulating the main bad driving offences and for providing tougher penalties for those who drink and drive are currently before Parliament in the Road Traffic Bill.

In addition, regulations will be introduced shortly requiring speed limiters to be fitted to all new heavy goods vehicles from August 1992, and we propose to extend this requirement to most articulated vehicles now on the road.

Rail Transport

21. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to boost rail transport.

Mr. Freeman: Investment in British Rail is currently at its highest level in real terms for some 30 years, and London Underground is also investing at record levels. Major projects under way include BR's investment for channel tunnel passenger and freight services, further new rolling stock for Network SouthEast and the electrification of the east coast main line, due to be completed this summer. London Transport's major investment includes extensions of the Docklands light railway, the Jubilee line extension and east-west crossrail.

Civil Aviation

22. **Sir Robert McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the present position of discussions with the United States of America on civil aviation matters.

Mr. McLoughlin: Preliminary discussions have taken place about the possibilities for further liberalisation of transatlantic air services and talks will resume later in the year. Our aim will be to remove obstacles to fair competition, which hinder our airlines at present, and to remove unnecessary regulation.

Greater Manchester (Grants)

23. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what grants he has made to improve the quality of public transport in Greater Manchester in the past three years and approved for the next three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are giving total grant of £53 million to the Manchester Metrolink project over the years 1988-89 to 1992-93. Credit approvals have also been made available for this and various other projects, including the airport rail link.

Fishing Vessels (Safety)

26. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow by the Minister of Shipping on Monday 22 April, *Official Report*, column 755, he is now in a position to introduce legislative measures concerning the provision of immersion suits for the crew members of United Kingdom registered fishing vessels over 10 m in overall length; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The practicability of immersion suits for fishermen has to be established before legislative measures for this provision can be introduced. Funds have been allocated for a research programme to investigate the use of immersion suits, other buoyancy aids and recovery devices.

Canning Town (Railway)

27. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he will take of his visit to Canning Town in consideration of requests for investment in interchange facilities between the three electrified lines which will serve that area.

Mr. Freeman: I found my visit to Canning Town on 2 January very helpful in understanding the debate over the design of the new station there. Having heard what was said by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and others on that and later occasions, I remain content that the design proposed by the Underground is both reasonable and adequate.

The Gulf (Pollution)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 15 April, column *1*, what progress he is making with contracts for Alba International Ltd. of Aberdeen for clean-up operations; and what discussions he has had with Bechtel.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are not involved in the Gulf clean-up contracts to which the hon. Member refers—they are between the International Maritime Organisation and the company.

A1 Experimental Red Route

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the Transport and Road Research Laboratory report on the A1 experimental red route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The findings from the preliminary monitoring done by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on the operation of the red route were published on 28 May. A copy of the press notice was sent to all Members with a constituency interest and copies has been placed in the Library. In summary, the findings were as follows.

Journey times have reduced, up to 30 per cent. between the peaks, and are now 40 per cent. more reliable. Bus journeys are significantly more reliable. The number of vehicles using the route have gone up slightly. Callers had increased at some 60 per cent. of businesses monitored, although at 20 per cent. the number of callers had gone down by more than 10 per cent.

Further monitoring will take place throughout 1991.

Road Hazards (Warning System)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce a system of road hazard awareness similar to that in Germany in respect of use by drivers of hazard warning lights and lane discipline.

Mr. Chope: The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 have extended the use of hazard warning lights by allowing drivers on motorways and 70 mph dual carriageways to warn following drivers that they are slowing down because of a temporary obstruction ahead. The law in Germany is similar to that in this country.

M20

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether, when the line of the widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5 is published, those of the dwellings that have been acquired by his Department in connection with this widening scheme will be resold to individual home-owners as quickly as possible where they are situated outside the line of the scheme;

(2) when the dwellings that have been acquired by his Department in connection with the widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5 will be resold to individual home owners.

Mr. Chope: Dwellings that are clearly surplus to requirements will be released for sale as soon as the preferred scheme has been announced. Where there is some doubt, the properties will be retained until all the necessary statutory procedures have been completed. In both cases, the dwellings will be released subject to the expiry of any tenancies then in force.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what form of tenure, conferring what degree of security of tenure, the dwellings in his Department's ownership between junctions 3 and 5 of the M20 are currently being occupied.

Mr. Chope: Dwellings are currently let on two-year fixed-term tenancies with vacant possession on expiration of the term, unless extended by agreement.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the line of the M20 widening scheme between junctions 3 and 5, and when he expects construction of this widening to start and to be completed.

Mr. Chope: I hope to make an announcement about the form of widening for the M20 motorway between junctions 3 and 5 in the summer. The programme thereafter will depend to a large extent on the public's reaction to the proposals and the need for statutory procedures, including any public inquiry. Recent experience of other widening schemes suggests that construction could start by 1995 with completion two years later.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many dwellings between junctions 3 and 5 of the M20 have now been acquired by his Department; and how many more he expects will be acquired in connection with the widening scheme between junctions 3 and 5.

Mr. Chope: Between junctions 3 and 5 of the M20, 193 dwellings have been acquired by the Department. A further 89 are in the process of acquisition. I cannot forecast how many more properties may be acquired.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the dwellings that have been acquired by his Department between junctions 3 and 5 of the M20 are being managed by *(a)* the North British housing association, *(b)* the Tonbridge and Malling housing association and *(c)* others.

Mr. Chope: All the dwellings acquired between junctions 3 and 5 of the M20 are being managed by the North British housing association.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. McLoughlin: Investment by the Department of Transport in energy efficiency over the past two years is estimated to have been:

	Cash terms £ 000s	*1990-91 money terms* £ 000s
1989-90	250	270
1990-91	270	270

Before 1989-90 the Property Services Agency was responsible for most investment in energy efficiency measures and separate figures for the Department of Transport are not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of energy audits carried out in the Department of Transport were:

	Number
1986-87	1
1987-88	7
1988-89	4
1989-90	1
1990-91	2

In each case a variety of measures to produce energy savings were recommended and have been or are being implemented.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the last year.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1990-91 the Department devoted approximately three person-years to energy management. This included the time of a dedicated energy manager.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the European Commission about the application of the European Community directive on environmental impact assessments to the proposed M11 link road and the east London river crossing; with what result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The European Commission wrote to the Government some time ago after receiving complaints alleging that environmental assessments under Community law should have been produced for both schemes. The Department answered these allegations in written responses to the Commission. The last correspondence with the Commission was in August 1990 and the Department has received no indication from it that it is about to reopen the matter.

Railway Passenger Coaches

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to encourage the introduction of privately owned passenger coaches to supplement those of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: We have set the British Railways Board the objective of increasing the involvement of the private sector, and there are already a number of privately owned coaches operating on British Rail track. Our ultimate goal is, of course, the privatisation of British Rail.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has concerning noise abatement measures in areas in the direct flight path of Glasgow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: BAA is responsible for noise abatement measures at Glasgow airport. A number of such measures are in force including night restrictions and noise preferential departure routes. A noise monitoring system has been installed. These measures are similar to those at other major UK airports.

Hazardous Chemicals (Shipment)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out all regulations in place to cover the shipment of toxic and hazardous chemicals, including wastes in the English, Irish and Bristol channels.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his answer, 14 May 1991, col. 113]:* The regulations covering the shipment of toxic and hazardous chemicals by sea are as follows:

The Merchant Shipping (Tankers) (EEC Requirements) Regulations 1981
The Merchant Shipping (Tankers) (EEC Requirements) (Amendment) Regulations 1982
The Merchant Shipping (Gas Carriers) Regulations 1986
The Merchant Shipping (IBC Code) Regulations 1987
The Merchant Shipping (BCH Code) Regulations 1987
The Merchant Shipping (IBC Code) (Amendment) Regulations 1990
The Merchant Shipping (BCH Code) (Amendment) Regulations 1990
MP and MS (Dangerous Goods and Marine Pollutants) Regulations 1990
The Merchant Shipping (Control of Pollution by Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk) Regulations 1987
The Merchant Shipping (Reporting of Pollution Incidents) Regulations 1987

HEALTH

Strokes and Heart Attacks

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will show separately for men and women the numbers of *(a)* heart attack cases and *(b)* stroke cases treated by the national health service in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will estimate the cost to the national health service of treating these patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the numbers of cases treated in NHS hospitals with a main diagnosis of heart attack or stroke are given in the tables.

Financial returns of health authorities do not identify costs of specific treatments and operative procedures.

Estimated number of men and women where principal diagnosis is ICD410 Acute Myocardial infarction, NHS Hospitals England 1983-85, 1988-89 and 1989-90

Year	Males	Females
1983	66,084	36,029
1984	67,339	38,249
1985	70,613	39,811
1988-89	72,730	42,545
1989-90	71,019	42,303

Source: 1983 to 1985 Hospital In Patient Inquiry 1988-89 onwards Hospital Episode Statistics.
Note: Data from 1988-89 is provisional, based on incomplete data and may be subject to future revision.

Estimated number of men and women where principal diagnosis is ICD436 Acute but ill defined cerebrovascular disease, NHS Hospitals England 1983-85, 1988-89 and 1989-90

Year	Males	Females
1983	30,168	35,885
1984	30,879	36,748
1985	33,021	40,791
1988-89	33,125	39,742
1989-90	34,095	41,270

Source: 1983 to 1985 Hospital In Patient Inquiry, 1988-89 onwards Hospital Episode Statistics. Data compiled by SM12A.
Note: Data from 1988-89 is provisional, based on incomplete data and may be subject to future revision.

Cardiac Resuscitation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has issued to district general hospitals and independent hospital trusts about the need for training in cardiac resuscitation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for local clinical management.

Census

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are applied to the appointment of temporary staff for the census.

Mr. Dorrell: Temporary staff employed on 1991 census work fall into two main categories: staff employed locally throughout Great Britain on the data collection operation, and staff employed in two central processing centres.

The temporary data collection staff are employed in a part-time capacity for periods ranging from a few weeks to 11 months. There are four different levels, census area managers, census officers, assistant census officers, and enumerators. The following main criteria were applied in selecting temporary data collection staff:

Census area manager
- Proven record of managing a large work force.

Census officer
- Ability to manage a team of about 50 people.

Assistant census officer
- Ability to supervise a team of up to 17 people.

Enumerator
- Ability to apply detailed instructions and communicate with the public.
- Numeracy
- Ability to write legibly
- Previous relevant experience
- Evidence of suitable personal and interpersonal qualities

Candidates for all temporary census jobs were selected on individual merit against the criteria. Where candidates were of equal merit, preference was, where possible, given to those currently unemployed and, for the processing centre jobs, to those who had participated in a relevant Government training scheme.

The temporary staff in the processing centres are employed in a full-time capacity for periods ranging from eight to 18 months. Most of the posts are for clerical or data processing staff. The following main criteria were applied in selection of temporary staff at the processing centres:

- Ability to assimilate detailed written instructions quickly
- Ability to work quickly and accurately

Candidates for all jobs had to be at least 16 years old and those for the processing centres less than 60 years old.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total projected cost of the current census, *(b)* staff costs and *(c)* property costs.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1991 census of Great Britain is estimated to cost the following over the year period 1986-87 to 1995-96.

£ million

Costs	Amount
Staff costs	102·0
Property costs	10·2
Other costs[1]	23·8
Total	136·0

[1]Includes such items as computing equipment, printing, and publicity.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of his staff have been temporarily transferred or seconded to posts relating to the census; and what arrangements have been made to cover their work.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1991 census in England and Wales is an integral part of the work of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, one of the departments for which my right hon. Friend is responsible. The question of transferring or seconding the office's own staff does not therefore arise. To supplement its permanent staff at the time of the census, the office engages temporary staff by direct recruitment and some staff on temporary secondment from other departments. No staff from the Department of Health are currently seconded for this purpose.

Dentists

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the percentage increase of fees allowed to dentists in the NHS for laboratory services in 1989 and 1990; and if he has any plans to increase these in 1991 to take into account the raised rate of VAT in force.

Mr. Dorrell: Fees for NHS dental treatment provided under the general dental service are set by the independent dental rates study group (DRSG). Where laboratory work is involved, DRSG uses a sample of current trade catalogues to calculate the average laboratory component of each item of treatment priced. The overall increase in the laboratory costs used by the DRSG in 1989 and 1990 was 1·04 per cent. and 5·36 per cent. respectively. We expect to receive the report of the 1991 DRSG shortly, and I understand that the group's recommendations have taken account of the effect of the change in the rate of VAT.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that NHS dentists do not cut costs by using inferior laboratory services; and if he will ensure that all NHS dentists purchase their laboratory work only from laboratories registered with the CADLAS certification scheme.

Mr. Dorrell: General dental practitioners (GDPs) are required by their terms of service to use only materials which are suitable for the purpose for which they are used. GDPs are, however, independent contractors with family health services authorities and are free to buy products from the dental laboratories of their own choosing. It follows that, while the Government welcome CADLAS, it is not prepared to countenance the restrictive rule suggested by my hon. Friend.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken by the Northumberland Ambulance Trust to persuade leading ambulance men to opt out of the Whitley Council pay and conditions; how many ambulance men have stayed within the Whitley Council agreement; and what disciplinary action has been taken against them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Staff transferring to trust employment retain their existing terms and conditions of service. Changes in terms and conditions of service are a matter for the trust and staff together and can be negotiated at any time after transfer.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the current full salary and total expenses allowances and other emoluments and payments in kind to the chief ambulance officer in the Northumberland Ambulance Trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. That is a matter for the board of directors of the trust.

Mental Health Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest available figures of cost per patient per week of in-patients at each *(a)* mental handicap and *(b)* mental illness hospital in the Trent region.

Mr. Dorrell: As a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the steering group on national health services information (the Körner committee) the costing information submitted by authorities from 1977-88 is no longer compiled on the basis of type of hospital but focuses on district-based treatment costs by speciality/speciality groups within all hospitals.

Information relating to the Trent region for the financial year 1989-90 (the latest currently available) is shown in the table.

Average Speciality Costs per Patient Day—Patients Using a Bed—1989-90

District	*Mental handicap £ (cash)*	*Other psychiatric specialities*[1] *£ (cash)*
North Derbyshire	35·99	42·93
Southern Derbyshire	43·83	42·17
Leicestershire	35·83	43·28
North Lincolnshire	68·19	55·16
South Lincolnshire	56·36	41·48
Bassetlaw	30·58	30·84
Central Nottinghamshire	63·98	46·20
Nottingham	60·86	51·64
Barnsley	51·22	50·54
Doncaster	37·70	34·38
Rotherham	47·24	42·92
Sheffield	38·95	40·41

[1] Includes, where applicable, mental illness, child and adolescent phychiatry, forensic psychiatry, psychotherapy and old-age psychiatry.

Notes

1. The figures may include treatments provided both to in-patients and day cases (those who occupy a bed for at least a period of time but do not stay overnight) under the recommended Körner definition "patients using a bed".
2. The figures cover direct treatment costs only. Expenditure incurred on general services, overheads and capital is excluded.

Charges (Exemptions)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the cost of extending exemption for all NHS charges to recipients of *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* community charge benefit, *(c)* state pension, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* severe disablement allowance, *(f)* mobility allowance, *(g)* attendance allowance and *(h)* disability working allowance and to people in full-time education.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available. People within the categories listed may already be entitled to exemption from NHS charges under the present arrangements or may qualify for full or partial remission of their charges on grounds of low income.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current salary of the chief executive of each NHS trust; and what was the salary payable in each case to the equivalent post before the granting of trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No information is held centrally on the salaries of national health service trust chief executives, which are a matter for individual trust boards.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make public the report prepared by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte on trust applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 16 November 1990 at column *246*.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown in percentage terms of the occupation of those appointed to the boards of directors of hospital trusts.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will tabulate by current occupation, or former if retired, those persons he has appointed as chairmen in the first wave of national health service trusts and as chairmen designate in the second wave.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Chairmen and non-executive directors of NHS trusts are appointed on the basis of their

personal qualities and experience and for the contribution they can make to the effective management of the trust. Each chairman's and non-executive director's curriculum vitae is submitted in confidence.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those spheres for which he was responsible to Parliament prior to the recent reorganisation of the national health service and introduction of hospital trusts, and for which he no longer is responsible.

Mr. Waldegrave: I remain accountable to Parliament across the whole range of my responsibilities, including for all aspects of the national health service.

Productivity

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he measures productivity in the national health service; and whether he intends to introduce other forms of measurement.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no single measure: the Department looks at a number of indicators, including unit costs, throughput and hospital length of stay. However, a broad measure of the overall increase in efficiency of the hospital and community health services (HCHS) can be obtained by comparing increases in activity levels with increases in expenditure. The overall increase in activity is obtained by weighting together the increases in various areas of the service by their costs. This shows improvements in efficiency of 15 per cent. since 1978, or 1·4 per cent. per year on average.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the infant mortality rate in the north east.

Mr. Dorrell: The infant mortality rate for the Northern regional health authority for the last five years is set out in the table, together with that for England and Wales.

Infant mortality rate for England and Wales and for the Northern Regional Health Authority[1]. Rate per thousand live births.

Year	*Northern RHA*	*England and Wales*
1986	9·8	9·6
1987	8·7	9·2
1988	8·4	9·0
1989	8·4	8·4
1990	[2]7·9	[2]7·9

[1]Coterminous with North standard region.
[2]These figures are provisional.

Friern Barnet Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from North East Thames regional health authority on the facilities for patients in Friern Barnet hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Temporary Posts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total number of temporary posts relating to the census, *(b)* the number of these posts filled by transfer or secondment from each Government Department, *(c)* the number of these posts filled by transfer or secondment from Government-funded agencies, *(d)* the number of posts filled by people who are registered as disabled and *(e)* the number of posts filled by temporary transfer of health board employees.

Mr. Dorrell: Excluding the temporary data collection staff, the total number of temporary posts created in OPCS to handle work in connection with the 1991 census for England and Wales is 2,292.

The numbers of posts expected to be filled by temporary transfers from Government Departments or executive agencies are:

	Number
National Savings Bank	31
The Scottish Office	20
Department of Social Security	20
Ministry of Defence	11
UK Passport Agency	6
Employment Service	4
Customs and Excise	2
Home Office	2
Central Office of Information	1
Charity Commission	1
Department of Education and Science	1
	99
Not yet confirmed	24
Total	123

A total of 286 posts have been filled by the internal transfer of OPCS staff and the remaining 1,883 posts are being filled by direct recruitment.

None of the posts has been filled by transfers from other Government-funded agencies.

I will write to the hon. Member about the number of posts filled by people who are registered as disabled.

None of the posts has been filled by transfers from the health boards.

Laundry Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is provided to fund the incontinent laundry service; and what is his estimate of the number of patients requiring that service in *(a)* Waltham Forest, *(b)* London *(c)* nationally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the percentage of national health service patients above the age of 65 years who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department can make no reliable estimate of the number of NHS patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Current scientific evidence suggests that about 7 per cent. of people aged 65 years and over suffer from dementia. About 70-75 per cent. of the cases in this age band may be attributed to Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his estimate of the cost of Alzheimer's disease to social services;

(2) what is his estimate of the cost of Alzheimer's disease to the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where he ranks the development of an effective treatment for Alzheimer's disease among other priorities for elderly health care.

Mr. Dorrell: The prevention of, or the development of an effective treatment for, Alzhiemer's disease would be a major step forward in the care of the elderly. The Government support biomedical and clinical research into a wide range of disabling conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, through grants in aid to the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the percentage of *(a)* all deaths, and *(b)* deaths beyond the age of 65 years which are attributable to Alzheimer's disease (i) throughout the world, and (ii) in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no data on mortality readily available for the world. The table shows the percentage of *(a)* all deaths; and *(b)* deaths for persons aged 65 years and over which are attributable to Alzheimer's disease in the United Kingdom and for Great Britain for the most recent years for which data are available.

Number and percentage of deaths from Alzheimer's disease[1] for the United Kingdom and Great Britain 1989 and 1990.

	All ages	*65 years plus*
1989 United Kingdom		
Deaths Number	1,220	1,124
Percentage	0·19	0·21
1990 Great Britain		
Deaths Number	1,504	1,397
Percentage	0·24	0·28

[1] Ninth revision International Classification of Disease Code 331·0

NHS (Employers' Salaries)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *117*, if he will list all those persons who are classified as employers in the national health service, stating the salary in each case.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: National health service employers are corporate bodies.

Condoms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been specifically provided to general practitioners for them to supply condoms to at-risk patients in relation to family planning and the spread of AIDS; and if he will indicate their areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no provision for general practitioners to prescribe condoms. District health authorities, where they perceive a local need, are able to supply condoms to local GPs for free distribution to any patient, if this is thought desirable. Condoms are also available without charge at family planning clinics.

Leukaemia

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has yet received advice from COMARE, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, on the study of parental occupations of children with leukaemia, published in the *British Medical Journal* on 23 March.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. The Government are grateful to COMARE for its advice. We note that COMARE endorses the authors' caution in drawing conclusions from the data, and that the study findings do not warrant any specific recommendations for the Government to consider.

Following is the full text of COMARE's advice:

Comare statement on LRF study

Background

1. On 23 March 1991 the British Medical Journal published the findings of a study entitled "Parental Occupations of Children with Leukaemia in west Cumbria, north Humberside and Gateshead". This study was undertaken by the Leukaemia Research Fund Centre at the University of Leeds in conjunction with the Childrens' Cancer Unit at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

2. The authors' stated objective was to determine whether parental occupations and chemical and other specific exposures are risk factors for childhood leukaemia.

3. This study is independent of the programme of research recommended by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) which includes research aimed at elucidating any relationship between parental occupational exposure to ionizing radiation and development of childhood leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL). Nevertheless, aspects of the study are clearly of relevance to the work of COMARE which has undertaken to update its advice to government as further research data concerning possible associations between ionising radiation and childhood leukaemia—NHL become available. In view of this, the Department of Health and the Health and Safety Executive have referred the results of this study to COMARE for consideration and advice.

The Study

4. 151 Children under 15, diagnosed with leukaemia/NHL between 1974 and 1988 while resident in west Cumbria, north Humberside or Gateshead were ascertained from the Yorkshire Regional Children's Tumour Registry and the Northern Region Children's Malignant Disease Registry. Those who had been born in the same area as that in which they were resident at diagnosis met the criteria of eligibility for analysis. Interview data were obtained for 109 such cases.

5. Controls, obtained mainly from district health authority birth registers, were matched for sex, date of birth and health district of birth. The study design aimed to obtain two controls for each case. For those controls for whom interview data could not be obtained, replacement controls were recruited where possible but not all cases had two controls.

6. A complete history of employment and of exposure to specific substances and radiation was obtained for the biological parents from the time they started work to the end of the analysis period. Similar data were collected for any other adults living with the child for more than three months from before birth to the time of diagnosis. 9 industrial and occupational groupings, coded according to Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) classifications were tested as hypotheses. In addition, data on 15 specific exposures and a check list of 22 known chemical carcinogens were analysed. In all 480 comparisons were computed.

7. A fundamental part of the study design was a separate analysis of the data for evidence of risk through six pathways: each of the biological parents both prior to conception and during gestation (four pathways) and all adult male and female household contacts (includes biological parents) from birth to diagnosis (two pathways). In all cases where a

statistically significant result was found for exposure of bilogical fathers during gestation the fathers had also been exposed around the time of conception.

8. For the 25 fathers who reported radiation exposure prior to birth, a subclassification of their exposure to ionising radiation was produced after checks with the National Registry for Radiation Workers (NRRW) at the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) and British Nuclear Fuels PLC, Sellafield, Cumbria (BNFL). Exposures were classified as "certain" for those recorded on the NRRW or by BNFL and "possible" for other contract workers on nuclear sites and industrial radiographers. Those reporting exposures in occupational settings such as education and medicine were classified as "unlikely". The remainder reported non-ionising radiation exposure and included radar and radio operators.

9. Selected results of the occupational analyses were reported, including the results that were statistically significant in any one of the six pathways analysed. Adjustment was made for inter-dependence of some results and in some instances interpretation was aided by direct inspection of the data. In addition the authors undertook comparative analyses of the six exposure pathways.

10. The authors state that few risk factors were identified for mothers but note that the results show some associations for mothers working in food-related occupations or in catering, cleaning and hairdressing before conception. However they consider that the absence of any specific range of occupations accounting for the significantly raised risks suggests that the finding may be due to chance. The only other preconceptional risk for mothers that reached statistical significance was exposure to wood dust. Preconceptional exposure of biological fathers showed the greatest numbers of significant odds ratios. After adjustment for possible confounding factors independent contributions to risk in the preconceptional period were found for exposure to wood dust, radiation and benzene.

11. The authors urge that the results be interpreted cautiously because of the small numbers, overlap with another study and multiple exposure of some parents. They state further, that it is important to distinguish the periods of parental exposures since the risk factors identified were almost exclusively restricted to the time before the child's birth.

Comare's Advice to Government

General considerations

12. This study has been undertaken independently of COMARE's recommendations and the committee is grateful to the authors for making a draft available for discussion.

13. We agree with the authors that the results must be interpreted cautiously and we would stress that interpretation of this type of research is a complex matter. Demonstration of a statistical association does not necessarily imply a causative relationship. Proper interpretation requires that the study be considered in the context of other research, both epidemiological and biological. There is, in general, little consistency amongst the findings of epidemiological studies relating to possible links between parental occupation and childhood malignancies and the authors of this study draw attention to some of the reasons for this in their Discussion.

14. Although this statement contains some general observations which apply to all the findings, the remit of COMARE has necessarily led us to restrict detailed discussion to those findings which relate to radiation exposure.

Methodology

15. The use of retrospective questionnaires is inevitably open to some reporting bias.

People who agree to participate as controls in such studies may be intrinsically different from those who refuse. The findings for the controls may therefore be unrepresentative and replacement of non responders will not necessarily ameliorate this effect.

16. The original study design did not incorporate any means of validating the occupational and exposure histories. The interpretation of the results hinges on the validity of the data and the study's potential value would be enhanced considerably if validation could be achieved. The data relating to radiation exposures has been validated to some extent by cross checking with the NRRW and BNFL records. However the validation is incomplete since it did not include those parents who did not report occupational exposure to radiation. Furthermore, validation was not attempted of the radiation exposures of contract workers and industrial radiographers.

Results

17. A large number (480) of comparisons were computed in the analysis and we share the authors' view that some significant associations might have been expected purely by chance. Indeed, we note that the number of significant associations found, falls within the limits of chance expectation. This observation reinforces both our and the authors' caveats against using the results to draw conclusions about causal links.

18. The authors report a threefold risk associated with radiation exposure during the preconceptional period which remained significant after adjusting for possible confounding factors. They state that the finding is not independent of that of Gardner et al. in West Cumbria because of the geographical overlap for cases and similarity of methods of selecting controls. However they also state that this risk is not confined to Cumbria and that exposed case fathers did not work exclusively in the nuclear industry.

19. The above statements refer to the results derived from the basic data prior to any attempt at validation by cross checking with the NRRW and BNFL records. However, for those fathers subsequently classified as having "certain" exposure to ionising radiation, the statistical significance of the result is dependent on the cases common to both this and the case control study of leukaemia and lymphoma among young people near Sellafield nuclear plant in West Cumbria undertaken by Gardner et al. Thus, while this study's findings offer some confirmation of those of Gardner they do not provide independent evidence of an association between objectively confirmed paternal exposure to ionising radiation prior to conception and development of leukaemia/NHL in children. The data do not provide firm evidence of a risk to children of fathers exposed to radiation outside the nuclear industry.

General Conclusions

20. This study has documented various parental occupational exposures as having a statistically significant association with cases of childhood leukaemia/NHL in the three areas studied. The authors have been cautious in drawing conclusions from the data and we feel that this is appropriate. We do not consider that the findings, of themselves, warrant our making any specific recommendations. However, we urge the authors to explore the possibility of extensive validation of the occupational and exposure histories and welcome the authors stated intention of considering further analyses.

Reference

1. Gardner M.J., Snee M.P. et al., Results of a Case Control Study of Leukaemia and Lymphoma among young people near Sellafield nuclear plant in west Cumbria, BMJ 1990, *300*, 423-429.

Fluoridation Act 1984

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures have been taken to implement the Fluoridation Act 1984.

Mr. Dorrell: The Fluoridation Act 1984 provides that fluoridation of water supplies is a matter for local decision. In the past five years funds have been made available to a number of health authorities to assist with the costs of new fluoridation schemes and to contribute towards the major costs of replacement of outdated plant and equipment.

In the Water Act 1989 provision was made for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to indemnify any statutory water undertaker against liabilities and costs incurred in connection with anything done by the undertaker for the purpose of increasing the fluoride content of any water supplied by the undertaker.

Tooth Decay

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of five-year-old children in the north-west region suffered tooth decay in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1988, *(e)* 1989 and *(f)* 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: Surveys of five-year-old schoolchildren in the north-west region carried out in the school years 1985-86, 1987-88 and 1989-90 showed that 58 per cent., 55 per cent. and 56 per cent. respectively suffered tooth decay.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned on the link between nutritional standards in school meals and the extent of dental caries in young children in the north-west region.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not commissioned any research seeking to establish a link between the nutritional standards in school meals and dental caries in young children, and, indeed, it would be extraordinarily difficult to mount research which isolated the effect of such standards from other factors influencing dental caries.

Cervical Smears

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of doctors in Wanstead and Woodford have now achieved targets for smear tests for cervical cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. Forty-five per cent. of GPs in the Redbridge and Waltham Forest family health services authority area received a cervical cytology target payment in respect of their achievements at 1 April 1990.

The North East Thames regional health authority has targeted cervical cytology as one of the key areas for improvement in its planning statement for 1991-92.

Drug Budgets

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria have been used by family health services authorities for setting indicative drug budgets where medical advisers have been unable to visit a general practitioner practice.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In setting indicative prescribing amounts family health services authorities consider practices' historic spending patterns, comparable average costs for the FHSA, special circumstances of the practice including high-cost patients, anticipated changes in demand and an allowance for the forecast increase in the cost of drugs. These criteria will apply whether or not a medical adviser visits an individual practice.

Student Nurses (Bursaries)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase bursaries to student nurses under the Project 2000 scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 20 May that bursary levels for Project 2000 students will increase by 8 per cent. from 1 September 1991. The new rates payable will be:

	£
London	
Under 26 at start of course	5,075
26 and over at start of course	5,615
Elsewhere	
Under 26 at start of course	4,320
26 and over at start of course	4,860

Osteoporosis

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *250*, if he is able to provide any statistical information about cases of osteoporosis among men and women.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Comprehensive statistics on the number of people with osteoporosis are not available.

The best available proxy is the number of hip fractures most of which are in the elderly group and are associated with osteoporosis.

Hip fractures

	Women	*Men*	*Total*
All admissions			
1987-88	32,708	9,055	41,763
1988-89	33,371	8,677	42,048
Admissions over 75			
1987-88	25,049	4,860	29,909
1988-89	25,722	4,866	30,588

The figures are extracted from the Hospital Episode Statistics. They are provisional estimates based on incomplete data and may be subject to revision when analysis has been completed.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Dorrell: The information available is as follows:

Year	*Cash £ million*	*Therms Million*	*kWh Million*	*Litres Million*	*Tonnes*	*Area Square metres*
1985-86	11·76	13·34	110	9·5	7,314	1·48
1986-87	9·68	8·5	110	9·05	8,230	1·51
1987-88	9·8	8·4	130	9·05	7,077	1·56
1988-89	9·95	7·8	130	4·6	4,250	1·61
1989-90	1·92	0·49	24·77	1·17	0	0·32

Note: All figures are in cash terms only.

Information is not available for earlier years, nor yet for the Department of Health (DH) for 1990-91.

Figures given for 1985-86 to 1988-89 are the combined DH/Department of Social Security totals.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Dorrell: The information availabe is as follows:

	£
1987-88	[1]54,000
1988-89	[1]65,000
1989-90	[2]75,000
1990-91	[2]100,000

[1] Joint DH/DSS
[2] DH only
(All figures are in cash terms only)

Information for years before 1987-88 is not available. Further investment was made in the period covered by the table by the Property Service Agency, but the amount cannot be identified separately from the agency's overall expenditure on energy efficiency.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of persons-years devoted to energy management in the latest years.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has one designated energy manager supported by the building managers appointed for each building on the estate. Information is not available on the proportion of time that each dedicates to energy management.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average wage was for an NHS nurse in 1979 and 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 14 May 1991]:* Information is not collected centrally on average rates of pay. The minimum and maximum rates of basic pay received by enrolled nurses, staff nurses and sisters in 1979 and by their broadly equivalent grades in 1989 were as set out in the table.

In addition to their basic pay, nurses received additional earnings from leads and allowances. Their total earnings from these sources in 1989 were as indicated in the table. There are further additions to basic pay for nurses in the London zone and the effects of these are also shown.

Nurses' pay: April 1979 and April 1989

	April 1979		*April 1989*			
Grade	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £	*Grade*	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £	*Estimated earnings on maximum of grade April 1989* £
Basic pay						
Enrolled nurse	2,850	3,411	D	8,565	9,815	11,611
Staff nurse	3,150	3,813	E	9,815	11,365	13,460
Sister	3,888	4,949	G	12,840	14,860	16,346
London zone						
Enrolled nurse	3,248	3,809	D	[1]10,317	[1]11,680	13,476
Staff nurse	3,548	4,211	E	[1]11,680	[1]13,369	15,464
Sister	4,286	5,347	G	[1]14,844	[1]16,864	18,350

[1] These figures include an inner London supplement of 9 per cent. of basic pay up to a maximum of £1,023.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Motoring Offences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the average fine imposed on motorists convicted of illegally using bus lanes in London during the hours of restricted use in each of the last three years;

(2) what has been the number of prosecutions of motorists charged with illegally using bus lanes in London during the restricted hours of use in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not separately identified in the motoring offences statistics collected centrally.

Prisoner Mothers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money per week a prisoner in a mother and baby unit receives at Her Majesty's prison at *(a)* Askham Grange, *(b)* Styal and *(c)* Holloway, excluding any personal money a prisoner may have accumulated.

Mrs. Rumbold: Earnings received by mothers in mother and baby units vary according to the activities in which they are involved and are set at the same levels as for prisoners elsewhere in the establishments.

At HM prison, Askham Grange, the earnings of the women at present in the unit range between £1·90 (unemployed) and £5·95 per week. At HM prison, Styal, the earnings range between £2 (light duties) and £3·80 per week. At HM prison Holloway, they range between £1·90 (unemployed, including remand inmates who are willing to work) and £4·45 per week.

In addition, mothers who apply and who meet the normal eligibility criteria receive child benefit at the appropriate rate.

Animals (Research)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the amounts given to funding research into alternatives to the use of animals in scientific procedures for each year since 1984.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 28 November 1990 to the question from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) at columns *416-17*.

In addition to the projects listed in that reply, a further project was funded in 1990-91—Dr. P. D. Minor, National Institute for Biological Standards and Control "Development of in vitro testing of polio vaccines" (£10,600 over one year).

Prisoners (Sexual Offenders)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in England and Wales imprisoned for committing a sexual offence have been released on licence in each month of 1990 and 1991 to date; how many years each person had actually served in prison since conviction; what was their original sentence; and how many such persons have since been re-imprisoned for committing a further criminal offence.

Mrs. Rumbold: Provisional figures for sex offenders released from prison service establishments on licence during 1990 by sentence length are as tabulated. I regret that the statistics on time served in prison since conviction and on re-imprisonment for committing a further criminal offence could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In general, prisoners serving sentences of over 12 months receive one third remission of sentence less any deduction made for offences against prison discipline. The time served by those released on licence is further reduced by the period of the licence. Data for 1991 are not yet available.

Sex offenders released on licence from Prison Service Establishments 1990

Month	*Sentence length*							
	Over 12 up to 18 months	*Over 18 months up to 3 years*	*Over 3 up to 4 years*	*Over 4 up to 5 years*	*Over 5 up to 10 years*	*Over 10 years less than life*	*Life*	*Total*
January	10	44	23	10	9	—	—	96
February	13	42	12	8	11	1	—	87
March	15	33	15	16	9	—	—	88
April	9	35	17	10	16	—	—	87
May	12	34	22	12	19	—	—	99
June	11	27	11	4	15	—	—	68
July	12	26	16	7	14	—	—	75
August	16	37	16	16	15	—	—	100
September	3	38	14	10	12	—	—	77
October	16	22	17	11	18	—	1	85
November	7	31	10	7	12	—	—	67
December	9	21	13	8	9	1	—	61
1990	133	390	186	119	159	2	1	990

Missing Persons Bureau

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made to supply the juvenile section of the missing persons bureau at New Scotland Yard with a computer system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that details of all juveniles reported missing in the metropolitan police district, except absconders from care unless they are considered to be immediately at risk, are now recorded on the missing persons computer at New Scotland Yard as soon as the report is received. Most absconders from care return after a few hours and the general practice is to record their particulars on the computer after 14 days.

Prisons (Coal Supplies)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, column *377*, to the hon. Member for Don Valley, if he will list those prison establishments that *(a)* receive their coal from British Coal and *(b)* receive it from elsewhere; and where they obtain it from.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: All the prison establishments listed in that answer receive their coal supplies from British Coal.

Life Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in England and Wales sentenced to life imprisonment have been released on licence in each month of 1990 and 1991 to date; how many years each such person had actually served in prison since conviction; and how many such persons released have since been re-imprisoned for committing a further criminal offence.

Mrs. Rumbold: The numbers of life sentenced prisoners released in each month of 1990 and the time they served is given in the following table. Data for 1991 are not yet available.

The only readily available information on reconvictions of life licensees is published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin. A copy of the latest report (issue 27/90—Reconvictions and Recalls of Life Licensees and Mentally Disordered Offenders: England and Wales 1988) is held in the Library.

Persons released from Prison Service establishments on life licence by time served[1] and month of discharge
1990

Number of persons

Month	*Up to 7 years*	*Over 7 up to 9 years*	*Over 9 up to 11 years*	*Over 11 up to 13 years*	*Over 13 up to 17 years*	*Over 17 years*	*All periods*
January	—	1	2	2	1	3	9
February	—	1	3	2	1	1	8
March	—	—	3	1	2	—	6
April	—	1	3	—	2	2	8
May	—	1	3	—	—	—	4
June	—	1	2	—	1	4	8
July	—	—	2	1	2	1	6
August	1	—	—	2	3	—	6
September	—	—	3	2	1	1	7
October	—	—	3	—	1	2	6
November	—	—	—	1	3	2	6
December	—	1	2	1	1	1	6

[1] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody, in non-Prison Service establishments or following any subsequent recall.

Animal Experiments

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is held on the percentages of macaques used as laboratory animals in the United Kingdom which are singly housed; and what is the total number used.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1989, the latest year for which figures are available, 2,904 scientific procedures involving macaques, were started. Information is not collected centrally on the number of such animals which were singly housed.

Refugees

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest waiting time for refugees from Somalia to join their families in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average time between receipt of an application in the asylum division and a decision is about 16 months. This applies to cases of all nationalities. No details are recorded by specific areas of the United Kingdom such as Liverpool.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to make a statement on Government policy towards refugees and asylum-seekers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) on 3 May at column *341*.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest number of refugees awaiting entry into the United Kingdom from Somalia at the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 1,700 applications for entry clearance from Somalis are awaiting consideration in the Home Office.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside to discuss the present situation in Somalia and the number of refugees awaiting entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for immigration would be glad to meet the hon. Member to discuss these mattters.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest number of refugees seeking settlement in Liverpool at the latest date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available. We do not record separately where in the United Kingdom asylum applicants would wish to live.

Road Tax

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were recorded in courts relating to the non-payment of road tax in each year since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: The available information, relating to England and Wales, for each year since 1983 is as follows:

Number of Proceedings for failing to pay appropriate motor vehicle licence duty, England and Wales

Year	*Proceedings*
1983	156,520
1984	159,113
1985	168,119
1986	181,893
1987	170,124
1988	178,875
1989	166,575

Source:
Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary tables. Issues 1983 to 1989.

Statistics for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and those for 1990 will be available in the autumn.

Dogs

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the imposition of a ban on the importation, breeding or ownership of *(a)* American pit bull terriers, *(b)* Japanese tosas and *(c)* any other breeds of dog; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement which my right hon. Friend made to the House on Wednesday 22 May at columns 945-46.

Taxi Drivers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the names of those organisations among the 65 representations made to him on the disclosure of criminal records of the convictions of taxi licence applicants as indicated in his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column 347.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The National Association of Taxi and Private Hire Licensing and Enforcement Officers, the East Anglian Federation of Taxi Associations and the Association of District Councils have made representations directly to the Home Office. Of the remaining representations 51 were from hon. Members, some on behalf of other individuals or groups, and the rest from local authorities and members of the public.

Re-offenders

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men serving non-custodial sentences are known to have re-offended during the period of that sentence; and how many have re-offended on more than one occasion during this period, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1989, the latest year for which information is available, convictions for a further offence were the reason for 16 per cent. of the terminations of probation orders and 8 per cent. of terminations of community service orders. (tables 2.15 and 6.11 of "Probation Statistics, England and Wales, 1989").

General Pinochet

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what immigration facilities were provided at the British Aerospace aerodrome at Hatfield, Hertfordshire, on the weekend of 18-19 May for the visit of General Augusto Pinochet; how many members of the Chilean party were admitted through those facilities; whether any were refused admittance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what immigration procedures were followed during the visit to Britain of General Augusto Pinochet to Britain on 18 May.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On arrival at Hatfield on 18 May, General Pinochet was accompanied by 11 Chilean nationals. By arrangement under paragraph 1(1) of schedule 2 of the Immigration Act 1971, entry was granted by two officers from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, St. Albans.

Silicosis

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available the reports of post-mortems carried out for the Home Office, where death was caused, or materially accelerated by, the prescribed disease silicosis in accordance with the Workmen's Compensation (Silicosis) Act 1918, and the resultant Refractories Industries (Silicosis) Scheme.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Coroners, who are independent judicial officers, have a duty to inquire into a death where there is reason to suspect that this is caused by a prescribed industrial disease and they have power to arrange a post-mortem examination. Under the Coroners' Rules a coroner is required, on payment of a prescribed fee, to supply a copy of a post-mortem report to a properly interested person and this will normally include the spouse. In cases where death is believed to be due to a prescribed industrial disease, the Home Secretary has issued guidance to coroners recommending that copies of the post-mortem reports should be made available to Medical Boarding Centres (Respiratory Diseases) to assist in the consideration of claims for industrial death benefit. But the coroner has no authority to make post-mortem reports generally available.

Fowsia Hussein

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has not replied to the letters of 4 February, 8 March and 24 April with regard to Fowsia Hussein of 24 Craston road, sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton; and if he will now do so.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The delay in replying to the right hon. Member's representations on behalf of Mrs. Hussein has been caused by the large increase in the number of applications for asylum in the past two years which has produced a considerable backlog of work in the asylum division. I announced on 26 April my intention to increase the staff in this division from about 120 to over 500. I shall be writing to the right hon. Member shortly.

Prisoners (Parole)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prisoners dealt with by the parole board in 1990 and during the first quarter of 1991 were heard before their parole eligibility date.

Mrs. Rumbold: These statistics could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost. However, while there were delays in early 1990, there are no longer any general delays although some cases may be held up for special reasons such as late changes in inmates' circumstances or a need to obtain additional information.

Mr. David Dawson

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will initiate a review of the conviction and sentence passed on Mr. David Dawson, a prisoner at Her Majesty's prison, Liverpool.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend is always ready to consider new representations about the safety of a conviction. Mr. Dawson's case was examined last year in the light of representations made and no grounds were then found to justify any further action. There are currently no representations before my right hon. Friend about this case.

Prisoners (Greater Manchester)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide the figures of remand and convicted prisoners still held in police cells in

Greater Manchester, and for surrounding areas, and the number expected to be held in such accommodation on 3 July, 3 August and 3 September.

Mrs. Rumbold: On Thursday 30 May there were 464 prisoners in police cells as a result of accommodation lost at Manchester prison. Of these, 134 were sentenced and 330 unsentenced. These figures reflect a recent increase in the number of persons remanded in custody by the courts. Efforts are continuing to overcome the difficulties caused by action on the part of the Prison Officers Association in certain prisons. While these difficulties persist and having regard to the fluctuations in demand from the courts it is not possible to predict accurately the level of usage of police cells on particular future dates, but the expected availability of further refurbished accommodation at Manchester and of new accommodation in Yorkshire should enable substantial inroads to be made into the task of clearing police cells from July onwards.

Immigration (Ad Hoc Group)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library, as soon as they become available, minutes of the ad hoc group on immigration, to which the British Government are a party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The ad hoc working group on immigration is an intergovernmental forum and it is not usual to publish details of intergovernmental negotiations while they are taking place. This group is directly accountable to EC immigration Ministers who are kept fully informed of its work. Public statements are normally issued following each of the six-monthly meetings of immigration Ministers and my right hon. Friend will, in the usual way, report to the House the conclusions of the meeting of immigration Ministers due to take place in Luxembourg later this month.

Trevi Group

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library, as soon as they become available, minutes of the meetings of the Trevi group of Ministers from EC countries.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Trevi group does not make public the minutes of its meetings; but as on past occasions I shall inform the House of the main conclusions of the next meeting of Trevi Ministers in Luxembourg on 13 and 14 June.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is as follows and is for the prison service estate only.

Spend for Energy Projects

Year	*Cash*	*1990-91 Money Terms*
1980-81	3,300	6,039
1981-82	228,000	380,760
1982-83	557,000	885,630
1983-84	363,000	540,870
1984-85	408,000	579,360
1985-86	578,000	774,520
1986-87	363,000	471,900
1987-88	313,000	384,990
1988-89	240,000	276,000
1989-90	1,230,000	1,328,400
1990-91	1,620,000	1,620,000

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: There are four dedicated energy managers in the Home Office. In 1990-91 a total of about six person-years was devoted to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Twenty-two energy audits were carried out in the Home Office in the last five financial years. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the then Home Secretary on 5 June 1990 at columns *421-23*, which gave details of 16 of these audits. The main conclusions of the other six audits were as follows:

HMP Onley

Improved controls to heating distribution mains system.
Change all GLS and tungsten halogen area lighting to compact fluorescent lamps.
Change perimeter lighting from 500W tungsten halogen lamps to high pressure sodium lamps.
Upgrade gymnasium lighting.
Replace Manor House heating system.

Ashford Police Training College

Replace tungsten lamps with compact fluorescent lamps.
Improve boilerhouse and heating pipework insulation.
Install Building Energy Management system.
Install new heating control.
Insulated Pool cover.
Heat recovery to swimming pool.
Automatic shut off taps to hand basins.

Ryton Police Training College

Replace tungsten bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps.
Replace overhead heating distribution mains.
Install lighting control system.
New heating controls.
Install Building Energy Management System.
Modify/upgrade boilers.

Birmingham Forensic Science Laboratory

Automatic lighting controls.
Install thermostatic radiator valves.
Recalibrate heating controls.
Install solar screening to some glazed areas.

Cwmbran Police Training College
Replace tungsten bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps.
Install lighting control system.
Improve heating pipework insulation.
Change external floodlighting lamps.
Heat recovery swimming pool hall.

Chantmarle Police Training College
Replace tungsten bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps.
Boilerhouse control and insulation improvements.
Road insulation.

Naturalisation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people over the age of 60 years have applied for naturalisation for each of the past 10 years; how many have been accepted; and how many of those refused were refused because they did not pass the language test.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is available only from 2 October 1986 of those applicants who were aged 60 or over at the time their applications were granted.

Year	*Granted*
[1]1986	17
1987	93
1988	71
1989	104
1990	98
[2]1991	110

[1] 2 October to 31 December.
[2] 1 January to 29 May.

It is not possible to say how many applicants aged 60 or over were refused in a given year, nor whether their refusal was because they had an insufficient knowledge of the English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic language.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of how much would have to be added to the price of each television set to replace the television licence fee, assuming the average life of a set to be five or 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On current estimated sales volumes, an additional charge of about £355 per TV set would be needed to raise a sum equivalent to current net licence fee revenue.

Passports

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many officials were involved and what procedures were followed in issuing EC passport number 003147077 by the Liverpool passport office; on what date an application was submitted by Phelim McManamon; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action has been taken by his Department since Sunday 26 May concerning the immigration and nationality department and the Passport Agency; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when Mr. Phelim McManamon was issued with a current British passport; whether the original application with photographs is retained; what checks were carried out on the file and photographs prior to issuing an EC passport in the name of Phelim McManamon; and if he will make a statement;

(4) on what date and from which office Mr. Vindokumar Patel of the east midlands immigration service was issued with a British passport; and what sort of passport was issued.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The matter referred to has been placed in the hands of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average delay in issuing *(a)* British citizenship and *(b)* an EC passport; and what is the appropriate fee in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average waiting times for those certificates issued in April were 36 months for certificates of naturalisation and 24 months for certificates of registration. From 1 March 1991, the fee for single and joint applicants for naturalisation on the grounds of residence has been £170, for applicants for naturalisation on the grounds of marriage to a British citizen £135, and for applicants for registration £85.

The average processing time for non-urgent straightforward properly completed passport applications was about 10 working days as at 26 May 1991. The fee for a standard United Kingdom passport is £15.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officials in the immigration and nationality department and the Passport Agency have access to Home Office and police computerised records; how many complaints he has received in the last year of unauthorised access to computer records; what action has been taken to combat such unauthorised access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Officials of the immigration and nationality department have access to various internal departmental computer systems used in their day-to-day work activities, but have no direct access to other Home Office systems or in the normal way to police computerised records. However, members of the immigration service involved in law enforcement may have access to police computerised records of convictions where this is relevant to inquiries into breaches or suspected breaches of the immigration laws.

Passport Agency staff at computerised offices, currently Liverpool, Glasgow, London and part of Peterborough, involved in the issue of United Kingdom passports have access to the United Kingdom Passport Agency computer. No agency staff have direct access to other Home Office computer systems and none have access to police computer records.

No unauthorised access to either the IND or United Kingdom Passport Agency computers has been reported.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) who prints British and EC passports available in the United Kingdom; who provides security at printing and during distribution and delivery of such passports; what checks and inspections are made at stores; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what complaints he has received about genuine British and EC passports being stolen from stores; how many such stores there are in the United Kingdom; who provides security at each store; what improvement in security is being introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: United Kingdom passports are printed, stored and distributed to passport offices under

conditions of high security by arrangement with HMSO. Details of internal security procedures must remain confidential. The recent allegations about theft of passports are being investigated by the police.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to ensure that genuine British and EC passports and visas are not obtained from his Department for illegal sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: United Kingdom blue and burgundy red (in the EC format) passports are issued only to people who have a legitimate claim to one. Checks and safeguards are built into the issuing system and procedures kept under regular review.

Visas are issued only at posts abroad, except that visa endorsements in the form of a stamp are made, in respect of dependent territory applicants, by the United Kingdom Passport Agency Office in London.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the normal application procedure and normal application requirements for *(a)* a British passport holder and *(b)* a non-United Kingdom national to apply within the United Kingdom for an EC passport; whether he proposes to change any part of these procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Satisfactory evidence of nationality and identity are required to support any application for a United Kingdom standard passport. There are no plans at present to change the procedures although the procedures are kept under regular review.

A non-United Kingdom national, unless he or she is a dual national, holding also British nationality, cannot qualify for the issue of either a standard blue or EC common format United Kingdom passport.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when police are requested to carry out inquiries into the operation of the Passport Agency; which police forces are involved; how many officials have, to date, been interviewed; when he expects police inquiries to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Metropolitan police, who are the only police force involved, began their inquiries on 28 May. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the first officials were interviewed on 31 May, and that inquiries are expected to take about three months.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officials in the last year in the immigration and nationality department and the Passport Agency have been *(a)* dismissed, *(b)* suspended on full pay, *(c)* suspended without pay, *(d)* retired early and *(e)* are on extended sick leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the past year, eight officials of the Passport Agency and the Immigration and Nationality Department have been dismissed, eight officials were suspended (four of whom were eventually dismissed and are included in the foregoing figures). Of those suspended four were on full pay, two on part pay and two without pay. There were no compulsory early retirements. Statistics for sick leave are not readily available in the form requested.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contacts the east midlands immigration service has had over the past five years with the immigration and nationality department and the Passport Agency; whether the company is on the list of those able to submit applications for new passports and for passports to be renewed on a priority basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Statistics of contacts with individuals, individual agencies, organisations or representatives are not recorded by the Immigration and Nationality Department. The information could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Such information is not available either in the United Kingdom Passport Agency, although I can confirm that the organisation to which the hon. Gentleman refers is not listed as an authorised agent by the agency.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information those applying for *(a)* British passports and *(b)* EC passports are normally required to supply; whether applicants are normally required to be interviewed by police officers; in what circumstances such application requirements may be varied; and who is authorised to approve such application variations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applicants for standard blue British passports and for British passports in the European Community common format are required to prove entitlement by production of documentary evidence to satisfy the Passport Office of their national status and of their identity. The requirements may be varied in cases of emergency or other urgent need for travel if authorised by a supervisor. Applicants are not normally interviewed by police officers.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the abolition of re-entry visas and visa exemption certificates by the United Kingdom; and what consultation he undertook with interested parties before taking this action.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a small number of representations. They have included both favourable and critical comment. It is not our normal practice to consult about immigration rules changes.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to minimise inconvenience to travellers, officials and airlines arising from the abolition of re-entry visas and visa exemption certificates by the United Kingdom; and what particular action he has taken to assist those visitors to the United Kingdom wishing to go on religious pilgrimage to Mecca.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are issuing applicants with an explanatory card and are providing guidance to airlines. Most travellers should find the new arrangements more convenient and their greater simplicity should make them easier for immigration staff and airlines to operate.

I recognise that the timing of the changes may cause difficulty for visitors who plan to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Officials have therefore notified Islamic bodies that

my right hon. Friend is prepared, exceptionally, to grant an extra one month's leave in order to bring such visitors within the scope of the visa exemption scheme. Applications should be made to the public inquiry office at Lunar house by 28 June and should be accompanied by a return ticket to Saudi Arabia valid for the Hajj period, as well as a ticket for the applicant's subsequent return to country of origin.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what benefits he expects from abolishing with effect from 16 May re-entry visas and visa exemption certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Because re-entry visas were issued without substantive consideration of applications they did not represent an effective use of resources. A new short-term multiple entry visa and an extended visa exemption scheme have been introduced to assist those who wish to travel abroad and return during a stay in the United Kingdom. Now that the visa exemption scheme applies uniformly to all visa nationalities the "visa exempt" passport endorsement, which was previously available on application, is no longer considered necessary or helpful.

Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the reasons for his decision in November 1990 to undertake inquiries into the activities of Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This is an operational matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Vindokumar Patel

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Mr. Vindokumar Patel of the east midlands immigration service has been retained by the immigration and nationality department or the police as an interpreter or in any other capacity in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. Patel has not been employed by the immigration and nationality department. The employment of interpreters by the police is a matter for the chief officer of police concerned.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the police concerning legislation required to deal with dangerous dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* Police forces and the police associations were consulted last year in connection with the proposals set out in the Government's "Control of Dogs" consultation paper. Three police authorities and 15 police forces responded to the Home Office along with the Police Federation, Police Superintendents' Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers. The views of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary have also been obtained.

I refer the hon. Member to the statement which my right hon. Friend made to the House on Wednesday 22 May at columns 945-46.

Probationers

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of persons *(a)* under probation service supervision and *(b)* in gaol in England and Wales have previously been in local authority care.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* These statistics are not available centrally.

Research

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to carry out research into the effects of transfer under the provisions of circular instruction 37/90 and its predecessor circular instruction 10/74.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* There are no plans at present to carry out such research.

Prison Sentences (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals were serving a prison sentence in England and Wales for each of the last five years; and what percentage was for drug offences.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* The readily available information is given in the table.

Population of sentenced prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June who were recorded as foreign nationals and whether sentenced for drugs offences, 1986-1990.

	Drugs offences	*Other offences*	*Offence not recorded*	*All offences*
1986				
Number[1]	886	1,880	27	2,793
Percentage	32	67	1	100
1987				
Number[1]	1,172	1,851	41	3,064
Percentage	38	60	1	100
1988				
Number[1]	1,097	1,768	30	2,895
Percentage	38	61	1	100
1989				
Number[1]	1,192	1,772	59	3,023
Percentage	39	59	2	100
1990				
Number[2]	1,248	1,790	134	3,172
Percentage	39	56	4	100

[1] Excluding fine defaulters.
[2] Provisional figures.

Football (Policing)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *235*, to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, when he will take a final decision on the terms of the Home Office circular to police authorities on the subject of police charges for policing at football matches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon.

Friend to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 21 May at columns *408-9*.

Taxi Drivers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has, by year for the last five years to date, on the number of licensed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers who have been found guilty of re-committing a criminal offence;

(2) what information he has, by year for the last five years to date, on the number of licensed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers who have been found guilty in United Kingdom courts of *(a)* rape, *(b)* child molesting, *(c)* indecent assault, *(d)* false declarations, *(e)* unlawful sexual intercourse and *(f)* any other criminal offence, and, in the case of *(f)* above, what the offence was.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* Information is not available centrally on the number of licensed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers who have been found guilty of re-offending.

Data are not collected centrally on the profession of offenders convicted of violent and sexual offences. The following table shows the number of offenders found guilty from 1985 to 1989 in England and Wales under Acts relating to hackney carriages and private hire vehicles only. Similar information is not collected centrally by the Northern Ireland Office or the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Number of offenders convicted of offences relating to hackney carriages (cabs and taxis') and private hire vehicles 1985-89

Offence Description	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
England and Wales					
London Hackney Carriages Acts, 1831, 1834, (excluding section 28) 1850 and 1853	300	439	172	193	129
London Hackney Carriages Acts, 1843,—Being drunk during employment as a driver of a hackney carriage or a driver or conductor of a stage carriage in the MPD	—	4	1	—	—
Town Police Causes Act, 1847, Sections 40-60, 62-68	422	364	595	648	786
Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, Section 61—being intoxicated while driving a hackney carriage	—	1	—	1	—
Town Police Clauses Act, 1889	6	2	6	5	2
Road Traffic Regulations Act, 1984, Section 35(7)	1	2	—	1	5
Local Government (miscellaneous) Act, 1976, Sections 45-80	45	49	20	28	27
Scotland	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Northern Ireland	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

[1] Data not collected

Note: In some instances, unless stated, the occupation of the offender (ie. driver or owner) is not known.

Open Prisons (Escapes)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what nationalities are the 54 women drug offenders and the 18 men who escaped from open prisons in the last three years and were not recaptured; and who held their passports.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 21 May 1991]:* Of the 54 women drug offenders unlawfully at large after absconding from open establishments in the last three years 34 are Nigerian, five are Ghanaian, eight are Jamaican, one is Colombian, one is Swiss, one is Indian and four are Guyanian.

Of the 18 male drug offenders unlawfully at large after absconding from open establishments in the last three years seven are British, two are Nigerian, three are Jamaican, one is Dutch, one is Italian, three are Pakistani and one is German.

The information requested as to who held all their passports is not readily available and a search of immigration, customs and prison service case files would entail disproportionate cost.

Parole

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of life sentence prisoners who were released for each year since 1981; and what was the number in each year whose release was proposed by the Parole Board and turned down by him or his predecessors.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 22 May 1991, c. 480]:* The number of people released on life licence in 1990 from prison service establishments was 80, not 81 as stated in the earlier reply.

Asylum

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the number of individual applications for asylum in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the number of dependants of the principal applicants for asylum received in (i) 1988, (ii) 1989, (iii) 1990 and (iv) January to March in the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 May]:* Information is not available in the form requested. The available information records dependants by the date of application of the principal asylum applicant and also does not generally include dependants who join a principal applicant after the principal application has been decided.

Available information on total asylum applications, including recorded dependants, is given in the following table.

Applications[1] for asylum in the United Kingdom, 1988-90

Year	*Number*
1988	5,570
[2]1989	16,400
[2]1990	30,000

[1] Including dependants applying with the principal applicant, and those, to date, arriving subsequently but before the principal

application was decided. Figures are tabulated by the date of the principal application.
[2] Provisional figures.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Agricultural College

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proportion of the applications for agricultural advice made to the Scottish agricultural college in 1989-90 and 1990-91 were for advice which was *(a)* wholly publicly funded and *(b)* partly publicly funded;

(2) what are the trends in the demand for agricultural advice from the Scottish agricultural college which is *(a)* wholly publicly funded and *(b)* partly publicly funded, measured over the three most recent financial years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available in the form requested, since most free advice is given alongside charged advice but is accounted for differently. However, based on the number of invoices issued, the trend has been towards increased demand for charged advice; and the college estimates that well over 30 per cent. of professional advisory staff time involves the giving of free advice.

Loch Creran (Bridge)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if a public local inquiry has been held into the proposed bridge over Loch Creran, in Argyll and Bute; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A public local inquiry has been held and it is expected that my right hon. Friend's decision will be issued during the course of this summer.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in assessing the priority of the proposed bridge over Loch Creran and other competing schemes elsewhere in the trunk road network; when he expects building work to begin; what timetable he envisages for the project; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The scheme to build a bridge over Loch Creran on the A828 cannot command priority at present in the trunk road programme given the high returns available from competing projects of national importance. Following publication of the public local inquiry decision, further preparation work on this scheme will proceed only when there is a reasonable prospect of early funding being available. Present indications are that this is unlikely to be the case within the next five years.

Historic Buildings

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the major churches and historic houses which have been restored with Government funds since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1979 Government grants totalling just over £50,000,000 have been spent on churches and historic houses. The major recipients of these funds are set out in the table:

Historic Buildings Repair Grants over £100,000 (either individually or cumulatively) paid to major churches and historic houses between April 1979 and March 1991

	Amount £
CHURCHES	
1984-85	
St. Andrews, Glasgow	149,962
1985-86	
1986-87	
Buccleuch and Greyfriars, Edinburgh	364,610
Free North church, Inverness	132,000
1987-88	
Glenorchy church, Dalmally	160,000
Cathedral of St. Paul, Dundee	314,500
St. John's kirk, Perth	103,500
Kelso North, Roxburgh	105,000
1988-89	
Pilrig and Dalmeny, Edinburgh	139,500
St. Cuthberts, Edinburgh	100,500
St. Mary's parish church, Edinburgh	118,687
St. Paul's and St. George's, Edinburgh	455,500
Cathedral church of St. Mary The Virgin, Glasgow	427,300
Evangelical church, Glasgow	262,000
Lansdowne parish church, Glasgow	308,270
St. Magnus Cathedral, Orkney	138,750
Dunbar parish church, East Lothian	400,000
1989-90	
The Round church, Bowmore	103,115 (between 1980-90)
Beith High, Cunninghame District	128,766 (between 1985-90)
St. Cuthberts, Edinburgh	335,300 (between 1979-90
St. Luke's Greek Orthodox, Glasgow	513,200 (between 1988-90)
Penicuik South Midlothian district	175,000
Paisley Abbey, Renfrew district	216,955 (between 1979-90)
Renfrew Old, Renfrew district	101,000 (between 1980-90)
St. Mathew's Church of the Nazarene, Paisley South	250,000
Church, Stirling	403,200 (between 1988-90)
1990-91	
St. Andrews cathedral, Aberdeen	291,700 (between 1985-91)
St. Machars cathedral, Aberdeen	167,470 (between 1982-91)
West Kirk of St. Nicholas, Aberdeen	159,100 (between 1987-91)
Ioan abbey, Argyll	158,107 (between 1982-91)
High kirk of Stevenston, Cunninghame district	109,000
St. Andrew's, Dundee	115,400
St. Peter's, Inverkeithing	109,000 (between 1979-91)
Canongate kirk, Edinburgh	235,400 (between 1989-91)

	Amount £
Cathedral church of St. Mary The Virgin, Edinburgh	345,000 (between 1982-91)
Dalmeny kirk, Edinburgh	103,200
St. John The Evangelist, Edinburgh	261,006 (between 1985-91)
Magdalen chapel, Edinburgh	127,300
North Leith parish church, Edinburgh	129,200 (between 1989-91)
Cathedral church of St. Mary The Virgin, Glasgow	517,300 (between 1987-91)
Ettrick parish church, Ettrick and Lauderdale dist[illegible]	100,300 (between 1987-91)
St. Margaret's RC Huntly	242,000 (between 1988-91)
Daviot parish church, Inverness district	113,700
Episcopal church of St. Margaret, Braemar	110,000
Johnstone High, Johnstone	135,600
Thomas Coats Memorial church, Paisley	126,600 (between 1988-91)
Church of The Holy Rude, Stirling	414,756 (between 1987-91)
Wellington church, Glasgow	103,600
Gilcomston South church, Aberdeen	1,432,000
HISTORIC HOUSES	
1984-85	
Aikenhead house, Glasgow	150,000
Fatima house, Kyle and Carrick district	135,500
1985-86	
Hatton castle, Angus district	150,000
Martyrs' public school, Glasgow	105,000
Trinity college, Glasgow	155,050
1986-87	
Castle Grant, Badenoch and Strathspey district	150,000
Corehouse, Lanark, Clydesdale district	198,514
Dalzell house, Motherwell district	190,000
1987-88	
Hospitalfield farm steading, Arbroath	159,000
Dowanhill centre, Glasgow	253,500
Grecian building, Glasgow	171,480 (between 1982-88)
St. Andrews-by-the-Green, Glasgow	158,400 (between 1979-88)
Wemyss Bay pier, Inverclyde district	100,000
Niddry castle, West Lothian district	136,400
1988-89	
House of Dun, Angus district	240,908
Barbreck house, Argyll	260,000
Auchinleck, Cumnock and Doon Valley district	204,300 (between 1983-89)
House of Gray, Dundee	223,600 (between 1979-89)
St. John's Highland Tolbooth church, Edinburgh	637,140 (between 1983-89)
52 Charlotte street, Glasgow	110,202
Clyde port authority building, Glasgow	110,480
Glasgow university	488,930
St. George's in the Field, Glasgow	200,000
Stephen's Engine Shop, Irvine	565,000
The Granary, City Mills, Perth	121,450

	Amount £
Fyvie castle, Banff and Buchan district	502,420 (between 1985-88)
Advocate's close, Edinburgh	133,506 (between 1984-89)
1989-90	
Forter castle, Angus	220,275
Marchmont house, Greenlaw, Berwickshire	172,846 (between 1986-90)
Hill house, Helensburgh	235,681 (between 1987-90)
Dunimarle castle, Culross	171,000
George Heriot's, Edinburgh	111,045 (between 1982-90)
Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh	120,000
Mertoun house, Newtown St. Boswells, Ettrick and Lauderdale	313,284 (between 1988-90)
Thirlestane castle, Lauder	546,420 (between 1979-90)
David Cargill house, Glasgow	166,340
Theatre Royal, Glasgow	504,670 (between 1986-91)
Bargany house, Girvan	142,166
Arniston, Gorebridge	142,400 (between 1979-90)
Aberlour house, Aberlour	101,010
1990-91	
Ascog house, Bute	128,000
Duart castle, Mull	176,477
Winter Gardens, Rothesay	119,408 (between 1987-91)
Paxton house, Berwickshire	473,000 (between 1980-91)
Alloa tower, Alloa	195,986
Morgan tower, Dundee	119,076 (between 1989-91)
Balgone house, North Berwick	100,000
Esk Mills, Musselburgh	206,280
Yester chapel, Gifford	139,000
Melrose railway station Ettrick and Lauderdale	172,832 (between 1984-91)
Barony church, Glasgow	535,300 (between 1989-91)
Carlton place, Glasgow	1,795,212 (between 1988-91)
Elder Cottage hospital, Glasgow	116,930
North Spiers wharf, Glasgow	591,407 (between 1989-91)
Queen's Cross church, Glasgow	257,335 (between 1979-91)
Culzean castle, Kyle and Carrick district	281,415 (between 1982-91)
Royal Faculty of Procurators, Glasgow	401,030 (between 1988-91)
Annanhill house, Kilmarnock	493,950 (between 1988-91)

	Amount £
339-343 High street, Kirkcaldy	298,000
Kinlochmoidart house, Lochaber district	(between 1988-91) 149,675
Prestonhall Folly, Pathhead	110,000
Tinwald house, Nithsdale district	(between 1988-91) 283,500
Birkhill house, North-East Fife district	158,150
Dall house, Rannoch school, Perth and Kinross district	120,000
Old Manse, Cromarty	(between 1981-91) 208,900
Bardowie castle, Strathkelvin	(between 1982-91) 114,940
Hopetoun house, West Lothian district	(between 1983-91) 593,524
Niddry castle, West Lothian district	(between 1987-91) 182,100
Rossdhu house, Dumbarton	(between 1983-91) 131,000

Community Charge

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish tables relating to Scotland of community charge levels and reductions, and so on, comparable to those provided for England in the answers of 17 April to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, column *184-85*.

Mr. Lang: The available average charge figures, which exclude the community water charge, are given below:

	£
(a) Before Community Charges (General Reduction) Act	
(i) Average charge (gross)	393
(ii) Average charge less community charge reduction scheme	377
(b) After Community Charges (General Reduction) Act and revision to community charge reduction scheme	
(i) Average charge (gross)	253
(ii) Average charge less community charge reduction scheme	241

Information about average charges after the award of community charge benefit is not yet available. Figures for average charges make no allowance for reduction due to capping.

Detailed information on reductions in payments is not readily available, but as I indicated in a reply I gave to the hon. Member on 15 April, at column 163, at least 2·25 million persons in Scotland are expected to benefit to the full extent of the £140 reduction.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide comparable but extended figures for Scotland to those put in the Library by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 4 April 1990 (deposit 5906) showing, for each local authority area and giving the assumptions made about equalisation, what level of (i) capital value rates, (ii) council tax and (iii) local income tax would be required in order to raise the same amount of revenue as with *(a)* the 1991-92 community charge, both before and after community charge reduction grant, and *(b)* the 1991-92 community charge, both before and after community charge reduction grant, but on the basis that the community charge was fully operational without any transitional or related elements.

Mr. Lang: Illustrative figures on household bills under the proposed council tax were issued by the Government on 23 April. On local income tax, I refer to the reply which my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) on 7 May at columns *415-17*. If the hon. Member can supply precise details of any alternative proposal which he wishes to put forward I would be happy to consider what assistance can be given in exemplifying it.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the work force in employment in Scotland are thought to be holders of two jobs.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Precise information on the number of people with more than one job included in the published work force in employment estimates is not available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many self-employed people there are currently in Scotland; and how this is calculated.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There were an estimated 234,000 self-employed in Scotland in June 1990. Estimates of the number of self-employed, compiled by the Employment Department, are derived from the 1981 census of population and trends in the number of self-employed recorded in the annual labour force surveys conducted in the spring of each year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many employees in Scotland are part-time workers.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Successive Governments have always treated part-time and full-time workers equally in the employment count.

In December 1990 there were an estimated 416,000 women part-time employees in employment in Scotland. In September 1989, the latest date for which an estimate is available, there were some 76,000 male employees in employment in part-time work in Scotland.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are currently on Government work-related training schemes.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish civilian work force estimate for December 1990 included an estimated 56,000 on Government work-related training programmes. The estimated numbers in Government work-related training aim to include most youth training and employment training participants with contracts of employment. The estimate is also designed to exclude those youth training and employment training participants whose training does not include work experience with an employer.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many self-employed people in Scotland pay national insurance contributions.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest estimate, from the 1988-89 survey of personal incomes conducted by the Inland Revenue, is that there were 230,000 individuals resident in Scotland with self-employment income, of whom some 120,000 were estimated to be liable to pay both class 2 and class 4 national insurance contributions in 1988-89, while an additional 70,000 were estimated to be liable to pay class 2 contributions only. Tax units with a total income under the PAYE threshold are excluded from these estimates. Some tax units having sufficient income to pay class 4 national insurance contributions, but sufficient personal allowance to prevent them from paying tax also may not be represented in the estimates.

Dental School, Edinburgh

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there has been any change in his plans for the provision of a replacement dental school and postgraduate institute in Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: The Government have endorsed the proposals of the McCallum working party for a dental hospital and postgraduate dental institute in Edinburgh. As Lothian health board is currently reviewing its acute service strategy there may be implications for how these proposals can be implemented. Any revised strategy will require the consent of Ministers. That will not be given unless Ministers are satisfied that the changes proposed would lead to a better standard of care and, therefore, be in the interests of patients.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount paid by each area health board in claims for medical negligence in each of the past five years; and what are the contingency estimates for 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested was not held centrally prior to 1 January 1990 when financial responsibility for medical negligence was assumed by health boards. Given the small number of cases in certain health boards, it is not appropriate on the grounds of confidentiality to publish the information for 1990 in the form requested, but the total amount of compensation payments, including claimants' costs, for all boards in that year was £1,364,446. Present estimates indicate that the settlement figure for 1991-92 is likely to be close to the 1990 figure.

Health Board Expenditure

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and which health boards overspent and underspent on *(a)* salaries and *(b)* supplies in the financial year ended 31 March.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally. Revenue expenditure allocations to health boards are not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for boards themselves to determine how much will be spent on salaries and supplies.

Southern General Hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total capital investment in the Southern general hospital for each year from 1985 to 1990; and what is planned in the current year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures for capital investment in the Southern general hospital are not held centrally for the financial years 1985-86, 1986-87 or 1987-88. Expenditure for the remaining years is as follows:

	£
1988-89	396,000
1989-90	86,000
1990-91	1,535,000
1991-92	[1]4,307,000

[1] Estimate.

Child Abduction

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children have been abducted from *(a)* a parent or other relative with custody, and *(b)* local authority care to locations (i) in other parts of the United Kingdom and (ii) outside the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During 1990 the Secretary of State received eight applications for assistance under the 1980 convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction. These applications related to 11 children of whom it was alleged that three had been wrongfully retained outwith the United Kingdom or abducted from Scotland. Information is not available about how many children were abducted where the abduction constituted a criminal offence under the Child Abduction Act 1984.

Arts Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing expenditure on the arts in Scotland in cash and real terms for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Public expenditure by my Department on the arts is set out in the table below. In addition, substantial sums are made available to support the arts in Scotland through the Scottish Arts Council which is funded by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts.

	Arts expenditure £ million	*Arts expenditure in real terms at 1990-91 prices* £ million
1979-80	12	26
1980-81	19	35
1981-82	21	35
1982-83	21	33
1983-84	18	27
1984-85	20	28
1985-86	22	30
1986-87	26	34
1987-88	26	32
1988-89	28	32
1989-90	29	31
1990-91	[1]35	35

[1] Estimated outturn.
Source: Scottish Public Expenditure Commentaries and the Government's expenditure plans 1991-92 to 1993-94, Cm. 1515.

Dogs

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people in Scotland have been treated by the national health service for bites by dogs in Scotland in each of the past five years;

(2) what was the cost to the national health service in Scotland in each of the past five years for treating people bitten by dogs;

(3) how many children under the age of 16 years have been treated by the national health service for bites by dogs in Scotland in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following is the number of in-patient and day-case discharges of patients from NHS hospitals in Scotland with a diagnosis of dog bites:

Year	*Under-16 discharges*	*Over-16 discharges*	*Total discharges*
1986	103	100	203
1987	85	90	175
1988	118	124	242
1989	97	92	189
1990	84	105	189

In addition, cases will also be treated at accident and emergency departments and by GPs, but the numbers are not recorded centrally.

The costs associated with the treatment of dog bites cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dog owners in Scotland have been fined because their dogs have fouled pavements in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the criminal statistics maintained by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Tobacco

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has to mark World No Tobacco Day on 31 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The main United Kingdom event in this field, on which efforts are concentrated, is our own long established and successful No Smoking Day, but the importance of World No Tobacco Day is also recognised.

On 31 May, the health education board for Scotland and Action on Smoking and Health (Scotland) will be formally integrated into GLOBALink, an international communication system for the exchange of anti-smoking information, while Glasgow 2000, a project supported by the board, will launch its initiative to promote smoke-free taxis throughout the city.

Royal Observatory

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his powers and responsibilities in respect of the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Royal Observatory, Edinburgh is funded by the Science and Engineering Research Council, for which responsibility lies with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when was the most recent review of access to further education by disabled students; what were its findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A report was completed in June 1990 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools entitled "Pupils and Young People with Physical Disabilities". That report included a chapter describing and evaluating regional and college policies. I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Education authorities have a statutory duty to secure the adequate and efficient provision of further education for their area. The report was accordingly drawn to their attention.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions were recorded in Scottish courts relating to the misuse, abuse or illegal use of orange badges intended for the exclusive benefit of disabled people in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the criminal statistics maintained by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions were recorded in Scottish courts relating to illegal parking in places designated for the exclusive use of disabled people in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the criminal statistics maintained by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote sport among disabled people in Scotland; what plans to provide local authorities in Scotland with additional funding for sport among disabled persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The promotion of sport for people with disability is undertaken on behalf of the Secretary of State by the Scottish Sports Council as an important part of its overall programme for widening access to participation in sport. The council enjoys a close working relationship with the Scottish Sports Association for the Disabled which it is supporting in 1991-92 with grant aid of £15,000 and the services of a senior council official. In addition, the Scottish Sports Council will be holding a national conference later this year on the topic of developing opportunities for people with disability.

It is for local authorities in Scotland to determine, within the resources available to them, their provision of sporting facilities, including those for people with disability, in the light of their assessment of local needs.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will appoint a resident of Renfrew district to the Argyll and Clyde health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health board members are not appointed to represent particular areas. As it happens, however, two executive members of the Argyll and Clyde health board are resident in Renfrew district.

Hospices

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing Scottish Office contributions to each voluntary hospice in Scotland for the most recent year available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Voluntary hospices, as locally based organisations, look to health boards for financial assistance under the funding initiative which the Government introduced last year. Records of financial allocations by health boards are not held centrally.

Census

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many Scottish Office staff have been *(a)* temporarily transferred or seconded and *(b)* given extended leave to take up posts relating to the census;

(2) if any Scottish Office staff temporarily transferred or seconded to the census are in receipt of salaries or payments from the Scottish Office;

(3) how many Scottish Office staff have been given extended leave to take up posts relating to the census;

(4) if any staff have been seconded to posts relating to the census; and on what basis their posts have been temporarily covered.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The processing of the Scottish returns for the 1991 census is being undertaken by staff of the General Register Office (Scotland). At the peak period, a total of 150 staff will be employed at the regional processing office, Hillington. Of these, 21 will be staff transferred temporarily from other duties and the remainder will be casual appointees. In addition, 85 staff in GRO(S) in Edinburgh, of whom 15 are casual staff, are currently assigned to census work. The costs of all these staff are met by GRO(S).

A further 20 Scottish Office staff have been lent to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for work relating to the processing of the England and Wales returns for the 1991 census. These staff are being paid by OPCS. Arrangements have been made for existing Scottish Office staff to cover the resultant vacancies on level transfer or temporary promotion.

No Scottish Office staff have been given extended leave to take up census-related posts.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if any staff of Scottish health boards have been seconded to posts relating to the census; and on what basis their posts have been temporarily covered;

(2) if Scottish health boards have incurred any costs due to staff being transferred or seconded to take up temporary posts relating to the census;

(3) how many staff of Scottish health boards have been given extended leave to take up posts relating to the census;

(4) what payments have been made to Scottish health boards for staff temporarily transferred or seconded to assist in the census;

(5) if any staff of Scottish health boards temporarily transferred or seconded to posts relating to the census, are in receipt of salary or payments from these health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Staff working in Scotland on the 1991 census of population are employed by the Registrar General for Scotland or, in the case of most of the staff at the Hillington processing office, by the Registrar General for England and Wales. No general arrangements for transfer or secondment of staff from Scottish health boards have been made and no payments to the boards for this purpose are being made.

Information on agreements between Scottish health boards and individual members of staff relating to leave and payments of salary is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Expenditure, Strathclyde

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of the expenditure by the Scottish Office in each area of priority treatment within Strathclyde.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Records showing the division of all Scottish Office expenditure between areas of priority treatment and other areas are not maintained. The breakdown of urban programme-approved expenditure for 1990-91 for projects in areas of priority treatment within Strathclyde region, for which the Scottish Office meets 75 per cent. of the costs, is as follows:

Approved expenditure in 1990-91

Areas of priority treatment in Strathclyde region	*Capital* £	*Current* £	*Total* £
Ardeer	9,200	36,315	45,515
Ardrossan Central	2,000	131,368	133,368
Ballochgoy	—	27,581	27,581
Balornock	9,767	63,904	73,671
Barlanark	—	55,194	55,194
Barmulloch	—	11,029	11,029
Bellsbank	—	132,661	132,661
Blantyre	94,883	899,387	994,270
Bow Farm	110,000	194,696	304,696
Braehead/Dalmilling/ Lochside/Whitletts	10,908	281,500	292,408
Brucehill/Castlehill/ Westcliff	12,887	234,000	246,887
Burnbank/Udston	—	57,669	57,669
Cambuslang	54,627	394,308	448,935
Carnwardric/Arden/ Kennishead	65,179	389,647	454,826
Carfin/Cleekhimin	—	—	—
Cartyne	37,000	98,678	135,678
Castlemilk	854,055	2,448,811	3,302,866
Craigneuk Motherwell	220,590	313,998	534,588
Craigneuk Petersburn	74,221	94,208	168,429
Cranhill	—	81,188	81,188
Croy	—	—	—
Drumchapel	242,061	2,579,786	2,821,847
Dunterlie	327,752	325,561	653,313
East End Clydebank	8,138	561,488	569,626
Eastfield	—	—	—
East Pollokshields	51,665	190,561	242,226
East Woodlands	—	89,427	89,427
Easterhouse	306,336	962,758	1,269,094
Faifley	2,048	110,833	112,881
Fergusle Park	889,745	774,552	1,664,297
Foxbar (Rivers)	46,613	165,169	211,782
Fullarton	16,070	35,492	51,562
Gairbraid/Botany/ Wyndford	188,098	63,870	251,968
Garthamlock	2,173	90,460	92,633
Germiston	61,769	249	62,018
Gibshill	212,493	122,764	335,257
Gorbals/Oatlands	103,421	451,064	554,485
Govan	528,548	1,141,556	1,670,104
Govanhill	2,213	166,804	169,017
Greater Possil	80,480	319,130	399,610
Greenend/Sykeside	13,280	177,088	190,368
Greenhead	—	24,599	24,599
Haghill	3,448	254,167	257,615

Areas of priority treatment in Strathclyde region	Capital £	Current £	Total £
Molendinar	—	19,862	19,862
Haldane	102,306	75,402	177,708
Hayocks	—	23,655	23,655
Hillhouse	159,247	328,684	487,931
Howwood Road	326,720	212,087	538,807
Inner Gear	299,516	910,385	1,209,901
Kelburn/Woodhall	446,266	197,006	643,272
Kirkshaws	—	44,498	44,498
Kirkwood	118,091	230,392	348,483
Laighstonehall/Fairhill	24,438	192,978	217,416
Langloan	16,164	1,690	17,854
Larkfield	—	336,909	336,909
Maryhill	195,932	242,146	438,078
Milton	368,534	597,479	966,013
Moorpark	7,038	264,000	271,038
Newmains	12,350	109,967	122,317
North Airdrie	278,349	448,353	726,702
North Forgewood	119,759	318,382	438,141
North West Kilmarnock	9,582	207,057	216,639
Orbiston	56,417	149,481	205,898
Parkhead	33,552	250,575	284,127
Plains	15,601	80,971	96,572
Pollok	5,572	495,369	500,941
Priesthill/Nitshill	73,929	203,871	277,800
Renton	66,655	322,695	389,350
Riccarton	34,844	112,956	147,800
Royston Corridor	—	212,694	212,694
Royston Hill	75,677	131,488	207,165
Ruchazie	—	33,377	33,377
Ruchill	152,844	99,680	252,524
Saltcoats	337,223	679,671	1,016,894
Shettleton	50,422	427,899	478,321
Shortlees	—	99,239	99,239
Springburn	22,993	346,945	369,938
Strone/Maukinhill	—	89,864	89,864
Temple	39,440	275,687	315,127
Townhead	192,533	111,733	304,266
Viewpark/Fallside	3,897	46,919	50,816
Vineburgh	2,059	57,574	59,633
Wellhouse/Easthall	—	1,374	1,374
Whinhall	19,846	35,758	55,604
Woodside/Firhill	25,780	264,477	290,257
Yoker South Langholm Street	1,313	233,220	234,533
Shortroods	19,106	46,294	65,400
Whitehill	108,530	78,713	187,243
Other Groupings[1]	3,487,246	9,822,111	13,309,357
Total	11,951,439	34,025,087	45,976,526

[1] Projects covering communities which do not readily fall into one distinct APT.

Physiotherapy

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the per capita expenditure on community physiotherapy services by each Scottish health board in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information given in the table relates to community paramedical physiotherapy services and is available only from 1982-83. Details have been taken from health boards' annual accounts and the publication, Scottish Health Service Costs. Figures for 1990-91 are not yet available.

Community Paramedical Physiotherapy Services per capita expenditure

Health Board	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £	1989-90 £
Argyll and Clyde	0·23	0·22	0·22	0·32	0·24	0·30	0·39	0·46
Ayrshire and Arran	0·09	0·12	0·17	0·26	0·23	0·36	0·58	0·69
Borders	0·60	0·58	0·68	0·69	0·77	0·87	0·47	0·51
Dumfries and Galloway	0·40	0·15	0·25	0·28	0·30	0·43	0·34	0·56
Fife	0·30	0·28	0·30	0·39	0·45	0·58	0·60	0·67
Forth Valley	0·31	0·34	0·37	0·39	0·45	0·56	0·77	0·84
Grampian	0·19	0·16	0·14	0·23	0·29	0·31	0·49	0·45
Greater Glasgow	0·29	0·28	0·38	0·54	0·62	0·72	0·65	0·73
Highland	0·18	0·19	0·22	0·32	0·37	0·33	0·38	0·38
Lanarkshire	0·27	0·32	0·38	0·41	0·54	0·62	0·72	0·78
Lothian	0·26	0·29	0·31	0·49	0·50	0·64	0·77	0·85
Orkney	—	—	0·37	0·42	0·55	0·94	0·84	0·87
Shetland	0·60	0·82	0·94	1·05	1·25	1·49	1·32	1·73
Tayside	0·09	0·10	0·10	0·10	0·18	0·18	0·22	0·25
Western Isles	0·52	0·64	0·79	0·77	0·11	0·05	0·02	0·06
Scotland	0·24	0·24	0·29	0·39	0·43	0·51	0·57	0·64

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the gross amount spent by each health board on community physiotherapy services in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information given in the following table relates to expenditure by health boards in Scotland on community paramedical physiotherapy services. Details have been taken from health boards' annual accounts and are available only from 1982-83. Figures for 1990-91 are not yet available.

Community paramedical physiotherapy services

Health board	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £	1989-90 £
Argyll and Clyde	102,352	98,908	98,292	139,218	102,577	131,484	173,945	202,571
Ayrshire and Arran	33,576	44,987	60,963	96,069	85,988	136,012	213,166	258,508
Borders	60,078	58,490	68,313	69,898	78,221	88,387	48,348	52,761
Dumfries and Galloway	17,881	21,791	36,374	40,147	43,062	62,393	49,441	83,203
Fife	100,751	92,717	101,416	131,412	151,998	200,702	205,368	230,175
Forth Valley	82,556	91,338	100,170	104,210	121,331	151,336	208,384	226,857

Health board	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £	1989-90 £
Grampian	89,829	77,476	67,506	112,226	142,875	158,011	224,401	228,224
Greater Glasgow	282,081	272,805	371,183	520,942	591,712	681,020	610,291	681,040
Highlands	[illegible]	35,967	42,512	63,024	74,117	66,521	75,788	76,287
Lanarkshire	152,823	182,324	212,583	228,768	302,120	350,691	403,309	440,670
Lothian	[illegible]	214,789	229,644	359,441	363,944	476,449	568,126	628,319
Orkney	—	—	6,981	8,075	10,538	18,238	16,396	16,953
Shetland	14,504	19,174	21,942	24,520	29,244	33,459	40,731	38,375
Tayside	35,514	36,006	37,711	38,757	68,716	72,798	35,317	100,632
Western Isles	16,275	20,022	24,326	24,067	3,448	1,465	607	1,803
TOTAL	1,216,503	1,266,794	1,480,426	1,960,774	2,169,891	2,628,966	2,923,618	3,266,378

Caliper Repairs

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contracts previously existed between the Common Services Agency and Glasgow firms for the repair of calipers; when these were terminated; which companies received new contracts covering the Glasgow area; and how satisfactory their work has proved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No contracts existed previously between the CSA and Glasgow firms. Up to 30 June 1989 health boards used contracts for the supply and repair of orthoses which had been nationally negotiated by the North West Thames regional health authority on behalf of the national health service. Among the suppliers was the company, Camp Cross Rhind based in Glasgow.

There are no separate contracts for the repair of calipers. New contracts for the supply and repair of orthoses were arranged by the CSA from 1 July 1989 and Camp Cross Rhind were one of three existing suppliers who were unsuccessful in tendering.

Companies covering the Glasgow area at present are:

McLeod and Napier (Glasgow)
M. Galloway (Glasgow)
John Barrons (Kilsyth)
Gilbey Orthopaedic Footwear (Glasgow)
Buchanan Orthotics Ltd. (Glasgow)
R. Taylor and Son (Orthopaedic) Ltd.
Remploy Ltd.
Spencer (Banbury) Ltd.

Generally the work of these companies has been satisfactory and in keeping with the terms of the contract.

Road Tax

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions were recorded in Scottish courts for offences relating to the non-payment of road tax in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table. Prosecutions are for offences under sections 8 and 12 of the Vehicle (Excise) Act 1971 and include failure to display a licence as well as keeping a vehicle without a licence.

Year	Number of persons proceeded against
1980	8,176
1981	5,567
1982	6,874
1983	9,665
1984	9,378
1985	9,468
1986	9,941
1987	9,478
1988	7,975
1989	6,825

EC Funds

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what payments were made to Scotland from *(a)* the European social fund and *(b)* the European regional development fund in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Awards to Scotland from the European regional development fund and the European social fund are set out in the table.

	ERDF (£ million)	ESF (£ million)
1979	38	[1]—
1980	28	[1]—
1981	70	[1]—
1982	72	[1]—
1983	84	[1]—
1984	103	[1]—
1985	69	[1]—
1986	84	[1]—
1987	93	15
1988	95	18
1989	68	29
1990	84	30
Totals	888	92

[1] Not available.

Note: Figures for the European social fund prior to 1987 could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Gas and Oil Policies

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what public money has been spent by his Department in each of the last five years for which figures are available to encourage firms involved in gas and oil to relocate all or part of their operations *(a)* from England and *(b)* from the rest of Europe; and what assessment he has made of how effective the policy has been.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not available. The attraction of inward investment to Scotland, both from overseas and from the rest of the United Kingdom, is the responsibility of Locate in Scotland which is funded and run jointly by the Scottish Office Industry Department and Scottish Enterprise. The resources expended by

Locate in Scotland in fulfilling this role are not allocated, nor capable of being assigned, to particular industrial sectors.

Housing

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what income Scottish Homes has received from *(a)* enabling receipts, *(b)* stock disposal, *(c)* voluntary transfers, *(d)* house sales and *(e)* disposal of non-housing assets, in the fourth quarter of 1990-91 and in the first quarter of 1991-92.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* The information for the fourth quarter of the 1990-91 financial year is set out in the table. Details for the first quarter of 1991-92 are not yet available.

	£ million
Enabling receipts	5·605
Stock disposal	0·410
Voluntary transfers	Nil
House sales	10·393
Disposal of non-housing assets	0·653
Total	17·061

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* new dwellings for rent were completed by housing associations, *(b)* new dwellings for rent were started by housing associations, *(c)* dwellings for rent were rehabilitated by housing associations and *(d)* other new dwellings were built for owner occupation, or improved for sale into owner occupation by housing associations, by Scottish Homes (or SSHA or HCS) in each calendar year and in each financial year since 1979 to the nearest available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* The information requested is set out in financial year form; records are not held on a calendar year basis.

	New build for rent starts	*New build for rent completions*	*Rehab for rent starts*	*Rehab for rent completions*	*Low cost home ownership provisions*
1979-80	1,274	800	2,261	1,059	—
1980-81	911	1,116	2,325	2,448	—
1981-82	1,169	1,286	2,323	2,820	30
1982-83	1,682	845	3,056	2,302	308
1983-84	1,145	1,693	2,262	2,983	211
1984-85	1,935	1,561	1,455	2,434	25
1985-86	652	1,083	1,469	1,357	230
1986-87	1,742	1,422	[1]1,502	[1]1,346	169
1987-88	1,454	1,445	[1]1,388	[1]1,472	230
1988-89	2,095	1,723	[1]1,756	[1]1,277	387
1989-90	2,287	1,376	[1]1,543	[1]1,464	340
1990-91	2,419	1,585	[1][2]1,467	[1]1,496	640

[1] Includes Partnership Areas and Community Ownership schemes.
[2] Includes Transfers from Local Authority Housing Stock.

Hairmyres Hospital

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of days, or part of days, in each of the last four quarters when there were no acute medical beds available for admissions to Hairmyres hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 May 1991]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

	Number of occasions per quarter
1990	
	27
	28
	31
1991	
	30
Total	116

These figures take no account of the fact that two beds are kept available to provide for emergency admissions during the night.

When no medical beds were immediately available at Hairmyres, GPs would contact one of the other acute hospitals in the area.

Islay

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what alternative proposals are under consideration by the Scottish Office and the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland regarding geese on Islay; which interested parties will be consulted; when he expects a conclusion to be reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 17 May 1991]:* A number of alternative approaches to the question of the effect of geese on agriculture in Islay are under consideration including proposals from the National Farmers Union of Scotland. Consultation will take place in due course with appropriate bodies representing farming and other interests. There is at present no specific date for a conclusion to be reached, but my right hon. Friend is aware of the concern on Islay about this matter.

Health Boards (Remuneration)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the annual rate of remuneration of *(a)* chairman of health boards and *(b)* members of health boards as at April 1988, 1989, and 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 21 May 1991]:* The levels of remuneration paid to health board chairmen reflect the significant increase in their workload and time commitment in recent years and are thus not directly comparable.

Health Board	*Chairman's remuneration at 1 April 1988 £ per annum*	*Chairman's remuneration at 1 April 1989 £ per annum*	*Chairman's remuneration at 1 April 1991 £ per annum*
Greater Glasgow	14,863	18,594	22,960
Lothian	13,158	16,724	20,695
Grampian; Tayside	11,460	14,855	18,430
Lanarkshire; Argyll and Clyde	9,758	12,986	16,165

Health Board	Chairman's remuneration at 1 April 1988 £ per annum	Chairman's remuneration at 1 April 1989 £ per annum	Chairman's remuneration at 1 April 1991 £ per annum
Ayr and Arran; Fife; Forth Valley; Highland	8,068	10,826	13,550
Borders; Dumfries and Galloway	6,368	8,655	10,920
Orkney; Shetland; Western Isles	3,903	5,299	6,575

Health board members did not receive remuneration prior to April 1991. From 1 April 1991 remuneration of £5,000 and £2,000 per annum is paid to the non-executive members of mainland and islands health boards respectively.

Local Authority Care

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole were received into local authority care where the cause was (i) family homelessness and (ii) alleged abuse or neglect in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 21 May 1991]*: The full information requested is available only from 1988 and is given in the table.

Year ending 31 March	Family homeless	Abuse or neglect[1]
Strathclyde		
1988	8	1,085
1989	5	765
Scotland		
1988	18	1,442
1989	7	1,307

[1] Includes all children who were made subject to compulsory measures of care, whether on a residential basis or in the community, in relation to grounds (b), (c), (d) or (dd) of section 32(2) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Foxes

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *414*, to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), when he expects to make a statement on Government grants for fox destruction, following research by Dr. Ray Hewson of Aberdeen university.

Mr. Lang: I have considered the report "Victim of Myth" and whether as a result of its findings any changes should be made to the present arrangements for the payment of grants to fox destruction clubs in Scotland. These grants are designed to meet 50 per cent. of the cost of the clubs with the balance being met by the members.

While the study is to be welcomed, I do not, however, consider that it supports conclusively the claim that the killing of foxes in the interest of sheep farming cannot be justified in Scotland. The evidence is that foxes do predate on lambs, possibly at about 2 per cent. of all births, and that, as the report itself points out, if foxes are numerous predation on lambs may increase. Group activity by farmers has proved effective in reducing their losses.

I therefore intend to continue the present scheme of grants to clubs for the purpose of controlling predation by foxes on sheep.

EMPLOYMENT

Paint (Safety)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence has been reported by the World Health Organisation that painters in the construction industry have an above-average chance of contracting cancer.

Mr. Forth: The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organisation, reported in 1989 that, on the basis of an extensive analysis of epidemiological data from a number of countries, a raised risk of cancer in those occupationally exposed as painters, including painters in the construction industry, had been identified.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which states in the European Community have banned solvent-based paint.

Mr. Forth: On the basis of information available, I understand that no state within the European Community has banned solvent-based paint.

Health and Safety (Publications)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many copies have been printed, and at what cost respectively, of the Health and Safety Executive publications *(a)* the "Control of Substances Hazardous to Health in the Construction Industry", *(b)* "Essentials of Health and Safety at Work" and *(c)* "Health Surveillance under COSHH".

Mr. Forth: The numbers printed and costs are as follows:

Title of publication	Copies printed	Cost £
(a) Control of Substances Hazardous to Health in the Construction Industry	30,000	17,303·02
(b) Essentials of Health and Safety at Work	130,000	201,818·93
Essentials of Health and Safety at Work (leaflet)	200,000	6,956·23
(c) Health Surveillance Under COSHH	25,000	11,669·87

Redundancy

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to amend the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 to allow the Secretary of State for Employment to award interest payments from the statutory redundancy fund to those whose statutory redundancy claim has been settled in their favour but whose case has taken a considerable time to conclude.

Mr Forth: I have no plans to do so. A major part of the redundancy payment procedure is outside the control of the Department of Employment and interest payments would therefore be inappropriate. Additional resources have been allocated to the redundancy payments service in 1991 and new procedures and equipment have been introduced to improve the speed of payment. These efforts will continue.

Mr Robert Jordan

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those bodies to which he has appointed or nominated Mr. Robert Jordan, formerly group managing director of FOSECO.

Mr. Forth: Mr. Robert Jordan has not been nominated or appointed to any bodies sponsored by this Department.

Meadowell Estate, Tyneside

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to include the feasibility study by residents of the Meadowell estate in north Tyneside in the study being prepared under the chairmanship of his Department's regional director.

Mr. Forth: The regional director of the employment service in Northern region under the aegis of the Tyne and Wear city action team, chairs a multi-agency group, which includes local authority and Tyne and Wear urban development corporation representatives. The group has been charged with determining the feasibility of a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration needs of the Meadowell estate in North Shields and has commissioned a study. Members of the group have received copies of the report prepared by residents and have attended a presentation given by the residents. The study team has been asked to take the report findings into account when preparing recommendations for consideration by the agencies involved.

HORIZON Grants

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has to issue guidelines and application forms to United Kingdom organisations for HORIZON grants to increase employment opportunities for disabled people, along the lines of those issued by other EC countries.

Mr. Forth: The amount of funding available to the United Kingdom for HORIZON was recently notified by the European Commission. My Department is now therefore in a position to compile the overall operational programme that has to be submitted to the Commission by the end of June. Guidelines and further information will be issued shortly.

TECs

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Forth: Excellent progress is being made in setting up training and enterprise councils. All 82 TECs in England and Wales are now in place with 75 fully operational. The whole network will be operational later this year, nearly two years ahead of schedule.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Forth: The information requested in the form shown could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, records of investment have been kept from 1 April 1990 and the amount invested is £523,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Forth: Over the last five years, energy surveys have been undertaken on 251 buildings. Because of the large number of surveys and the wide variety of recommendations it is not practical to list the main recommendations of each of the surveys.

Implementation of the recommendations of the surveys has led to reduced energy consumption and cost savings.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Forth: The Department has two dedicated energy managers, covering the major estates in the Employment Department Group. In addition we have a part-time departmental energy manager.

Energy management also forms part of the duties for those staff engaged in estate management.

The total number of person-years devoted to energy management in 1990-91 was six.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Forth: I regret that this information is not available from 1978 to 31 March 1990. Before 1 April 1990 the Property Services Agency was responsible for energy monitoring and did not retain this information in the form requested. From 1 April 1990 we have been responsible for paying our own bills and monitoring cost and consumption. However, utility companies are still submitting bills for the final quarter of 1990-91. Therefore the latest information which is available is for the first three quarters of 1990-91, which is as follows:

	Consumption	*Cost*
Electricity	52,082,398 KwHours	3,938,749
Gas	3,029,381 Therms	1,219,556
Oil	670,016 Litres	86,067

The square footage of the estate to which the figures relate is 11,579,518.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Terminal Illness Claims

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the success rate for *(a)* initial claims and *(b)* reviews of claims for attendance allowance under the terminal illness rules for his Department's offices in the Doncaster area; and if he will list the number of refusals by grounds for refusal;

(2) how many claims for attendance allowance under the terminal illness rules have been received by his Department's offices in the Doncaster area since the new rules came into force; what is the average number of days between day of claim and the date of decision for such claims; what are the shortest and longest clearance times to date; and what is the average clearance time for reviews.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for social security-related agencies *(a)* those that have published their business plans for 1991-92 and *(b)* those that have not.

Miss Widdecombe: All DSS agencies have published their 1991-92 business plans and copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the total staff of the Benefits Agency are on secondment from *(a)* his Department and *(b)* other Government Departments.

Miss Widdecombe: The Benefits Agency, along with other DSS executive agencies, is a part of the DSS. Accordingly it is staffed by departmental civil servants.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the establishment of the Benefits Agency and *(b)* the annual salary for each category of employee; and what savings his Department is expected to make in connection with this agency.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Pensioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response the Government made to the European Commission on its proposals for a European travel card for British pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) on 25 March at column *290*. I will send him a copy of my letter to Members of the European Parliament issued on 28 February.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost currently incurred weekly by pensioners in the Doncaster area for *(a)* heating, *(b)* lighting and *(c)* travel; and what were the comparable figures for (i) five and (ii) 10 years ago.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *486*, how many *(a)* single and *(b)* married pensioners in 1987 had no income other than the state basic pension and/or means-tested benefits.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 20 May 1991]:* In 1987 there were 810,000 single pensioners and 150,000 pensioner married couples with no income other than state retirement pensions (including net additional and graduated retirement benefit), supplementary benefit and housing benefit.

Mr Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost to his Department of *(a)* paying pensions to foreigners retired in the United Kingdom and *(b)* topping up the state pensions paid to them by their country of origin.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available. The United Kingdom retirement pension is paid to anyone who meets the national insurance contribution conditions, irrespective of nationality.

Appeals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants in the Doncaster area for severe disability premium are awaiting the decision of the appeal tribunal.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Single Parents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each month of 1990 and 1991 to date, for his Department's offices in the Doncaster area, the number of single parent *(a)* mothers and *(b)* fathers of small children who have lost benefit by working.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Care

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the level of funding of community care loans and grants at his Department's offices in the Doncaster area; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Scott: No such representations have been received.

National Insurance Fund (South-West)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* the number of employers in the south-west region, and *(b)* nationally, defaulting on

payments into the national insurance fund, *(c)* the number of employees involved, *(d)* the cost to the fund, and *(e)* the number of prosecutions made for the offence, for each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Jack: The number of employers defaulting on payments into the NI fund is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Indexation

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Government plan to introduce the limited price indexation under the terms of the Social Security Act 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: No final decision has yet been made.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were accepted for Motability in each of the past five years; and what proportion this represented in each year of the total number of people granted mobility allowance for the first time or on renewal.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Information on the number of people who have been accepted by the Motability scheme is a matter for Motability itself. However, the information in the table gives the number of mobility allowance beneficiaries who, at a given time, (and shown as a percentage of the total number of beneficiaries current on that date,) had their mobility allowance paid direct to Motability Finance Ltd. (MFL) in respect of lease or hire purchase agreements with Motability.

Information on the number of initial and renewal awards of mobility allowance was given in my earlier answer. It is not possible to draw a direct comparison between these figures, which are a cumulative total over the year, and those shown in column *(a)* of the table which are snapshot figures.

Date	*(a) Total number of awards paid direct to MFL*	*(b) Total number of Mob A recipients*	*Percentage of (a) to (b)*
At 28 March 1987	39,725	472,268	8·4
At 31 March 1988	52,492	523,181	10·0
At 30 March 1989	64,846	566,099	11·5
At 29 March 1990	81,714	605,235	13·5
At 26 March 1991	96,323	648,045	14·9

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the total numbers of persons who were *(a)* awarded mobility allowance for the first time and *(b)* had their mobility allowance entitlement renewed, in each of the past five years, and for each quarter during the present year; and if he will provide an analysis for each group between those awarded mobility allowance for an indefinite period, for three years and for periods less than three years.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Available information is in the tables.

Number of people awarded Mobility Allowance

Period	*First awards*	*Renewal awards*
April 1986-March 1987	91,992	25,760
April 1987-March 1988	93,247	26,684
April 1988-March 1989	91,043	31,389
April 1989-March 1990	93,918	29,489
April 1990-March 1991	95,480	34,775
January 1990-March 1991	22,407	10,439

Number of beneficiaries[1] by duration of award

Date	*Under 3 years*	*3 years*	*Over 3 years[2]*
At 28 March 1987	38,221	5,398	428,[illegible]
At 31 March 1987	43,145	5,138	474,898
At 29 March 1989	[illegible]27	5,046	514,226
At 30 March 1990	48,076	5,403	551,756
At 26 March 1991	50,884	5,748	591,413
At 25 April 1991	50,579	5,783	593,451

[1] Figures relate to all Mobility Allowance beneficiaries
[2] Includes awards of Special Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state what is his latest assessment of the date on which the new mobility allowance provisions of the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill will be fully in force.

Mr. Scott: We anticipate that entitlement to the new disability living allowance, which will replace both attendance allowance for people under 65 and mobility allowance, will commence in April 1992. We intend, however, to accept claims for the new benefit from February 1992.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish estimates for the number of severely disabled people who have had to move into residential care without the support of the Independent Living Fund in each of the past three years.

Miss Widdecombe: Information regarding the number of severly disabled people entering residential care is not available.

Barber *v.* Guardian Royal Exchange

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the recent judgment of the European Court in Barber *v.* Guardian Royal Exchange; and if he will make a statement on the costs and other implications of implementing this decision.

Miss Widdecombe: We have been giving careful consideration to all the implications of this judgment and we are in close touch with the European Commission and other member states about it. There are, however, several aspects of the ruling which are unclear. To obtain clarification we have agreed in principle to support a case brought by the Coloroll group pension scheme trustees who are proposing to seek directions from the European Court on how their liabilities to members should be discharged, in the light of the Barber judgment.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, showing separately for England, Scotland, Wales and

Northern Ireland for the years 1985-86 to 1993-94 expenditure on income-related rebates from local authority taxation, distinguishing rate rebates from community charge rebates, and showing, if necessary, a reconciliation to table 3 of Cm 1514.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of total spending on rate rebates and community charge benefits in England, Scotland and Wales from 1985-86 to 1990-91 are given in the table. The figures published in table 3 of the departmental report (Cm 1514) reflect assumptions current at the time of the autumn statement. Since then both the community charge reduction scheme and the £140 general reduction have been announced, and expenditure is now expected to be £1,300 million in 1991-92. A territorial breakdown of this figure is not yet available. Revised expenditure projections for 1992-93 and 1993-94 have not yet been finalised.

Information about spending in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Total benefit spending
£ million

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Rate rebates						
England	1,251	1,389	1,425	1,157	1,212	—
Scotland	176	188	215	168	—	—
Wales	51	58	61	48	50	—
Total:	1,479	1,635	1,701	1,373	1,262	—
Community Charge Benefit						
England	—	—	—	—	—	1,977
Scotland	—	—	—	—	197	208
Wales	—	—	—	—	—	87
Total:	—	—	—	—	197	2,272

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of the Disablement Income Group; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We regularly meet representatives of disability organisations to discuss a wide range of disability issues. In particular, on 21 February my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Social Security and I met the Disability Benefits Consortium which is an umbrella group representing over 250 disability organisations including the Disablement Income Group.

Social Fund

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the gross and net budget of the social fund for each year since its introduction, broken down into *(a)* crisis loans, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* community care grants and the fall in real terms of the social fund budget since 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: The figures are as follows. The gross expenditure has risen in real terms since 1988-89. Repayments have taken time to build up.

£ million

	1988-89 outturn	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 provisional outturn*
Crisis loans (gross)	17	22	28
Budgeting loans (gross)	108	119	128
Crisis loans (net)	9	8	9
Budgeting loans (net)	68	25	22
Community care grants	41	60	67
Regulated payments (gross)	32	39	57
Regulated payments (net)	32	38	56
Total gross expenditure	199	240	281
Total gross expenditure in 1988-89 prices[1]	199	226	245

[1] Deflated using the estimated GDP deflator.

Mr Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for help through the social fund have been made since its introduction *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in Leicestershire; and how many of those applications were turned down.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is available in the Library.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many families have benefited from the social fund in Leicestershire since its introduction; (2) what is the allocation of the social fund to Leicestershire county council for the year 1991-92; and what was it for the year 1990-91.

Mr Scott: Information is not collected in this format, but such information as is available is in the Library.

State Pensions

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission about a European Community draft directive on the equalisation of state pensions; and what position he has adopted.

Miss Widdecombe: There have been no firm proposals on the third draft directive on equal treatment in social security since it was last discussed in 1989. The Government are committed to the principle of equal treatment. We intend to co-operate in working with the European Commission and other member states to achieve an effective directive.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will amend regulations made under the Social Security Act 1975 to permit a person on sickness benefit with an untreatable condition and incapable of work to be absent abroad without losing the right of benefit.

Mr. Scott: Sickness benefit may be paid during a temporary absence abroad if the absence is for the specific purpose of being treated for an incapacity which existed before the person left Great Britain; or if, on the day the absence begins, incapacity has already lasted for at least six months. We have no plans to amend these regulations.

Fraud

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total annual cost of operating the fraud sector of his Department; and whether he intends to grant the sector agency status.

Mr. Jack: Social security fraud staff were reorganised into fraud sector teams on 2 January 1991. The estimated annual cost of operating these teams is £62,000,000, producing an annual benefit saving of about £383,000,000.

Since 1 April 1991 fraud sector teams have been included in the executive responsibilities of the new Benefits Agency. We have no plans to grant these teams separate agency status.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the value of the element within income support which covers community charge payments for *(a)* single people aged under 25 years, *(b)* single people aged over 25 years, and *(c)* a couple, in 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: Income support levels were adjusted in April 1989 to include help towards the average 20 per cent. contribution to the community charge. The amounts included were:

(a) for single people under 25 years and each member of a couple—£1·15;
(b) for single people over 25 years—£1·30.

These amounts now form an integral part of overall benefit rates which were uprated in April 1990 by 5·2 per cent. and in April 1991 by 8·1 per cent. Overall benefit rates are reviewed in the autumn and benefit levels for 1992-93 will be announced then.

The Government have proposed that from April 1993, when the new council tax is introduced, maximum benefit for those on income support and equivalent levels of income will be 100 per cent. of their liability for the new tax. There would be no minimum contribution to the new tax.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money income support claimants are expected to pay to local authorities in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: Income support recipients have to pay a 20 per cent. contribution towards the community charge. Across Great Britain as a whole this will amount on average to around 80p a week during 1991-92, taking no account of charge capping.

Estimates for 1992-93 are not available. However, the Government propose that from the introduction of the council tax in April 1993, maximum benefit for income support recipients will be 100 per cent. of their liability and there will be no minimum contribution.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Jack: Two full-time technically qualified managers have been appointed in the DSS; one in the Benefits Agency and one in the Information Technology Services Agency. Nine energy liaison officers have been appointed in the territorial directorates of the Benefits Agency to promote energy-saving practices and to monitor the energy target. They are assisted by colleagues in the territorial offices and in each local office. Detailed information about the time spent on energy matters in the territorial directorates is not readily available so it is not possible to calculate the total number of man years devoted to energy management.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what training Benefit Agency strategic planning teams with district management units are to receive before they draw up their strategic plans.

Miss Widdecombe: The training of Benefits Agency management is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the scale rate for supplementary benefit or income support for a single adult for each year since 1970; by what percentage this was increased each year; and what are the percentage increases in national average earnings and in the retail prices index for each of those years.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 20 May 1991]:* The information requested is in the table and is given for each

uprating date, rather than for each year; percentage increase columns show the change between each date. Comparisons between the uprating increases (column C) and the RPI and earnings increases (columns D and E) are difficult because each uprating factor either contained an estimate of future movements in the index or was based on a period earlier than the uprating period itself. The RPI and earnings figures are actuals for each period.

A *Benefit Uprating Date*	*B* *Benefit Rate*	*C* *Percentage Increase in 'B'*	*D* *Earnings Percentage Increase*	*E* *RPI Percentage Increase*
2 November 1970	5·20	—	—	—
20 September 1971	5·80	11·5	7·5	8·0
2 October 1972	6·55	12·9	15·7	8·5
1 October 1973	7·15	9·2	11·6	9·9
22 July 1974	8·40	17·5	14·2	13·5
7 April 1975	9·60	14·3	20·2	17·7
17 November 1975	10·90	13·5	11·5	11·7
15 November 1976	12·70	16·5	12·5	15·0
14 November 1977	14·50	14·2	9·3	13·0
13 November 1978	15·55	7·2	14·9	8·1
12 November 1979	18·30	17·7	19·1	17·4
24 November 1980	21·30	16·4	18·4	15·3
23 November 1981	23·25	9·2	10·7	12·0
22 November 1982	25·70	10·5	7·4	6·3
21 November 1983	26·80	4·3	7·3	4·8
26 November 1984	28·05	4·7	8·7	4·9
25 November 1985	29·50	5·2	6·5	5·5
28 July 1986	29·80	1·0	5·7	1·7
6 April 1987	30·40	2·0	6·2	4·4
11 April 1988	33·40	9·9	9·7	3·9
10 April 1989	34·90	4·5	9·6	8·0
9 April 1990	36·70	5·2	9·7	9·4
8 April 1991	39·65	8·0	—	6·4

Notes:

Column B—shows the Supplementary Benefit basic single householder scale rate for the years 1970-87 excluding housing costs. These were paid through Supplementary Benefit until 1982-83 (not included in the scale rates) and then paid via Housing Benefit. From April 1988 the figures are the Income Support basic personal allowance for a single person over 25. No Supplementary Benefit additional requirements or Income Support premiums for special needs have been included.

Column C—shows the percentage increase from one uprating date to the next. This will not necessarily reflect the uprating index for that year because of rounding. Also in the earlier years uprating was calculated by forecasting likely changes in the RPI and this sometimes meant that adjustments had to be made the following year.

Column D—gives the percentage increase in the average gross weekly earnings of all adult males form the New Earnings Survey. The figure for April 1991 is not yet available.

Column E—Shows the actual movement in the Retail Price Index for all items between uprating dates.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Clenbuterol (Livestock)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will support the introduction of legislation to authorise the removal of all livestock without compensation from farms where Clenbuterol/angel dust has been fed to farm livestock illegally.

Mr. Hanley: I am still considering the detailed provisions of new regulations to provide further controls and sanctions against the abuse of Clenbuterol. Such regulations will be made under the Food Safety Order (Northern Ireland) 1991 and will be subject to full consultation.

Livestock Marketing Commission

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what plans he has to appoint a representative of the Northern Ireland Master Butchers Association to the Livestock Marketing Commission, Northern Ireland;

(2) how long the Livestock Marketing Commission has operated in Northern Ireland; and how many persons representative of the Northern Ireland Master Butchers Association have served on it; and for what periods.

Mr. Hanley: The Livestock Marketing Commission has been in operation since 1967. Members are not appointed to represent sectoral interests. They are appointed as individuals in their own right on the basis of the experience and expertise which they are able to bring to work of the commission. No representative of the Master Butchers Association has been appointed and there are no plans to do so. Individual members of the association will, of course, be considered for appointment on their merits.

Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average waiting period for appointments, examination and fittings experienced by disabled persons at Musgrave Park hospital, Belfast, in each of the last two years.

Mr. Hanley: The Eastern health and social services board is responsible for the management of the artificial limb and appliance centre at Musgrave Park hospital. I am advised that in each of the last two years, the average waiting time for appointment/examination following amputation was one week. On average, fitting was then carried out within two to three weeks in a routine case and within six weeks in more complex cases.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many disabled patients in Northern Ireland require services provided at Musgrave Park hospital limb fitting centre, Belfast, annually.

Mr. Hanley: In Northern Ireland there are 1,700 patients with artificial limbs. About 1,200 of these patients attend annually.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated waiting period which disabled persons are likely to experience in future as a result of the decision to withdraw cover for absent doctors who normally deal with disabled patients.

Mr. Hanley: I am informed by the Eastern health and social services board that it has no knowledge of any such decision in relation to the services provided for disabled patients at Musgrave Park hospital.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to reduce the waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: During the past two years, the Department of Health and Social Services has made available an additional £467,000 for orthopaedic services in Northern Ireland in recognition of the need to improve the level of services and reduce waiting lists. I hope to announce shortly details of further additional resources for regional medical services developments this year, including orthopaedics. I believe that more can also be done to reduce waiting lists and waiting times through better management. Health and social services boards are currently responding to a report on better waiting list management by a group of clinicians known as CREST (clinical resource efficiency support team) which offers advice to the Department, boards and clinicians on ways to improve clinical efficiency. I am pleased to say that the numbers waiting for orthopaedic surgery fell from 4,939 in September 1988 to 3,456 in September 1990.

Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the implications of the introduction of trust status in respect of the Royal Victoria hospital for job security, job tenure and health care.

Mr. Hanley: Should the Royal group of hospitals be successful in its application for HSS trust status, I would expect it like any other trust to provide better health care for patients. Staff transferring to trust employment retain their existing terms and conditions of service, but they and the trusts can negotiate changes at any time thereafter.

Youth Services

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the education budget has been allocated to youth services in each year from 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1991 in the South Eastern education and library board area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	Percentage of recurrent block grant allocated to youth service	*Percentage of capital grant allocated to youth service*
1985-86	3·85	3·88
1986-87	3·26	0·71
1987-88	3·44	1·74
1988-89	3·30	2·31
1989-90	3·26	2·07
1990-91	3·15	0·57

Armagh Four

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many representations he has received seeking a judicial review of the case of the Armagh Four; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend has, in addition to a petition and numerous letters from the public, received a total of 144 representations about the case. These have generally sought to encourage him to exercise his discretionary power to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal, which he would do only if some new evidence or consideration of substance is produced. It is claimed in a dossier presented to my right hon. Friend in January that such new evidence does exist. The document is, therefore, being examined in detail and inquiries are being conducted at present to see whether this claim can be substantiated. Only when these inquiries have been completed and the results fully considered will my right hon. Friend be in a position to decide whether or not he would be justified in referring the case back to the Court of Appeal.

Social Fund (South Down)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the budgetary allocation in respect of the social fund to each social security office in South Down in each year since 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1991, respectively.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is available in the Library.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people who made applications for social fund loans and grants who were in receipt of income support were refused at each social security office in South Down.

Mr. Hanley: Details for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 are shown in the table. The figures include a small number of instances where crisis loans have been claimed by people who are not receiving income support. It is not possible to identify these cases.

Number of refusals

Social Security Office	1988-89		1989-90		1990-91	
	Loans	CCGs	Loans	CCGs	Loans	CCGs
Ballynahinch	51	29	168	163	101	99
Banbridge	212	86	347	257	331	315
Downpatrick	433	147	462	391	522	423
Kilkeel	35	23	69	53	100	71
Newcastle	147	46	232	133	205	150
Newry	424	315	689	841	1,258	1,196
Totals	1,302	646	1,967	1,838	2,517	2,254

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were refused a loan or a grant from the social fund in each of the social security offices in South Down because the budget was overspent, in each of the years since 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1991.

Mr. Hanley: Social fund budgets are allocated for the full year and managers must aim to ensure that they are not overspent. In order to achieve this and ensure that there is money available throughout the year, managers draw up monthly profiles based on estimated expenditure. They also issue guidance to their social fund officers on the level of priority of application that might be met. Details of the number of applications refused on grounds of insufficient priority for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 are shown in the table.

Applications refused on grounds of insufficient priority

Social Security Office	1988-89		1989-90		1990-91	
	Loans	CCGs	Loans	CCGs	Loans	CCGs
Ballynahinch	3	3	42	55	7	1
Banbridge	45	28	52	150	60	23
Downpatrick	180	10	140	82	118	8
Kilkeel	4	2	18	28	18	3
Newcastle	17	2	46	72	59	3
Newry	—	1	29	121	196	78
Totals	249	46	327	508	458	116

Child Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the full-year cost of raising child benefit in October to £9·55 a week for all children on the same basis as the answer given to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), 30 April, *Official Report*, column *163*.

Mr. Hanley: The cost for Northern Ireland over that of next October's actual benefit increases would be £29 million.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many families will benefit from the uprating in child benefit which will take effect from October.

Mr. Hanley: Child benefit is paid to 218,000 families in Northern Ireland, all of whom will benefit from the uprating in October 1991.

Muckamore College

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland *(a)* how many teachers with initial training qualifications from Muckamore college were appointed to teach within the education service in Northern Ireland with a reduction of five increments of teacher's salary prior to 1 April 1987; *(b)* how many teachers in schools for mentally handicapped children, with initial training qualifications from Muckamore college, transferred to the education service, Northern Ireland, from health and social services on 1 April 1987 without facing any reduction in salary; *(c)* what are the reasons for the difference in treatment of these two categories of teachers; and *(d)* what is the estimated cost of an ex gratia payment to teachers trained at Muckamore college who voluntarily transferred to the education service prior to 1 April 1987, to provide equality of treatment of teachers in *(a)* above with teachers in *(b)* above for salary and pension purposes.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Pensioner Couples (Income Support)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of new basic pensioner couples who are no longer entitled to income support because of the recent rise in basic pension; and what is the average amount that their income is above the required level.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In general, the income of those ceasing to be entitled to income support from the week commencing 8 April 1991 would have increased by at least 8·1 per cent. However, there was an additional real increase in the basic pensioner premium of £1 for single pensioners and £1·50 for couples aged 60 to 74 years.

Housing Benefit (South Down)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are in receipt of full housing benefit and partial housing benefit at each of the social security offices in South Down.

Mr. Hanley: Information is not collected in the form requested. The available information is as follows:

District	Full/partial housing benefit
NIHE district office area (tenants)	
Banbridge	2,072
Downpatrick	3,501
Kilkeel	1,040
Newry No. 1	2,822
Newry No. 2	2,571
District council area (owner-occupiers)	
Banbridge	474
Downpatrick	917
Newry and Mourne	2,651

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Rate Collection Agency.

Pensions

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost in 1991-92 of raising the single pension by £5 a week and the married pension by £8 a week above current levels on the same basis as the answer given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, 30 April, *Official Report*, column 162.

Mr. Hanley: The additional cost of increasing the basic retirement pension in this way in Northern Ireland would be around £53 million, assuming a corresponding increase in income-related benefits. A reliable estimate is not available of the net cost with no such corresponding increase.

School Transport

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total cost of providing early afternoon transport for primary 1 and primary 2 students in each education board area in each year since 1985;

(2) how many pupils availed themselves of early afternoon transport in each education board area, in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 May 1991]:* Statistics of the actual cost and numbers of pupils for whom early afternoon transport was provided since 1985 are not maintained separately by the education and library boards, but are included in overall costs and numbers for home to school transport. The estimated costs and numbers for 1990-91 are as follows:

Education and Library Board	Number of pupils	Annual cost £
North-Eastern	350	24,000
South-Eastern	430	22,000
Southern	727	61,000

The Belfast and Western education and library boards do not provide early afternoon transport.

DEFENCE

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken to inform the local emergency services when a bomb-laden aircraft *(a)* takes off or *(b)* lands at Royal Air Force Finningley.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Advance notification of operations is not given to civil agencies for operational security reasons.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date a bomb-laden aircraft last *(a)* took off and *(b)* landed at Royal Air Force Finningley.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Available records cover the last seven years, during which time no such aircraft took off or landed at RAF Finningley.

The Gulf (Mitla Ridge)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the RAF participated in the attack on Mitla ridge in the final day of the Gulf war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 25 March, at column *301*.

Memoranda of Understanding

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom and Canadian Governments on the use of training facilities in Canada and the use of British troops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the original memorandum of understanding between Her Majesty's Government and the Canadian Government that governs the use of the Suffield range, Canada, by United Kingdom forces and any amendments that have been made to the memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The training of the Brtitish armed forces in Canada is governed by an exchange of notes between the two Governments. These notes were exchanged on 26 November 1979, and in accordance with usual practice published in 1980 as Cmnd. 7894.

Training Injuries

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with the liaison between his Department and the Department of Social Security when dealing with cases such as that of No. 24754102 Lance Corporal J. Ray, Grenadier Guards, who sustained serious injuries during training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am satisfied with the liaison between the MOD and the DSS, which is kept under review.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the full report of the board of inquiry instituted to investigate the circumstances that led to No. 24754102 Lance Corporal J. Ray, Grenadier Guards, and two others sustaining injuries as a result of an explosion on the Suffield training area, Canada on 7 July 1989 or as much as will illuminate the unclassified summary of investigations dated 19 February 1991 in respect of whether Lance Corporal J. Ray or others were advised as to the possibility of buried unexploded munitions; and what precautions they were advised to take.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Board of inquiry reports are internal Ministry of Defence documents produced to enable the appropriate authorities to ascertain the cause of an accident or incident and to take steps to prevent its recurrence. As such they are confidential to the Department. A summary of the board of inquiry report into the tragic accident which occurred on the Suffield range on 7 July 1989 has been sent to solicitors acting for Lance Corporal John Ray. This summary includes the comment of the board of inquiry that the three soldiers were adequately briefed for the task they were undertaking when the accident occurred.

Radiation

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *256*, (1) if he will now provide a breakdown for *(a)* Rosyth dockyard, *(b)* Devonport dockyard, *(c)* Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment, *(d)* Coulport RNAD and *(e)* the Faslane submarine base, of individual radiation dose exposures for workers in the bands (i) 0 to 10, (ii) 10 to 15, (iii) 15 to 20, (iv) 20 to 30, (v) 30 to 40 and (vi) greater than 40 mSv for the year 1990;

(2) if he will give a breakdown for *(a)* HMS Neptune and *(b)* HMS Defiance of individual radiation dose exposures for individuals in the bands (i) 0 to 10, (ii) 10 to 15, (iii) 15 to 20, (iv) 20 to 30, (v) 30 to 40 and (vi) greater than 40 mSv for the year 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am unable as yet to add to the information set out in my letter to the hon. Member following my answer of 1 May at column *256*. Final dose figures for the dockyards and naval bases will be produced at the end of May, but I regret that Aldermaston data are now unlikely to be complete until the end of June.

Battle Tanks

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's estimate of the present cost of scrapping a main battle tank.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department would expect to incur no net cost in disposing of a main battle tank for scrap.

Output

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what percentage is defence output of the total output of the (i) south of England and (ii) the north of England;

(2) what percentage is defence output of the total output of (i) Wales and (ii) Scotland.

Mr. Alan Clark: Government statistics do not identify "defence output" as such.

Civilian Jobs

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's estimate of the number of civilian jobs in the United Kingdom which are dependent upon defence expenditure.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the right hon. Member to tables 4.1 and 6.8 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990".

Research and Development

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of Her Majesty's Government's defence budget is spent on research and development.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Figures for the defence budget and defence research and development are published in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". In 1990-91 the percentage was 11·6 per cent.

Electronic Systems

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of Her Majesty's Government's expenditure on defence is spent on electronic systems.

Mr. Alan Clark: Government estimates exist only in respect of MOD expenditure placed with the electronics industry in the United Kingdom. I refer the hon. Member to table 2.5 in volume 2 of the 1990 "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Degaussing Range, Barons Point

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with the representatives of local fishermen concerning the establishment of a degaussing range, for use by Trident submarines, near Kilcreggan at Barons point; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The degaussing range at Barons point was selected after a major study of possible locations in the Upper Clyde and proved to be the only site to meet all the required parameters.

The Clyde Fishermen's Association (CFA) was not consulted during the early discussions in 1989 to consider the proposals to lay a degaussing range at Barons point. However, it is now our practice to consult the CFA on matters affecting fishing in the Clyde.

Training Flights

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the regulations governing the carriage of live ammunition by aircraft in training flights over Britain are identical for British and American aircraft.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In general the regulations governing the carriage of live ammunition by British and American aircraft on training flights over Britain are comparable, although they take account of differences in aircraft types and roles, and weapons carried.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on the carriage of nuclear weapons on combat aircraft over the United Kingdom in peacetime.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is long-standing practice neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons in specific instances.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why military police refused access to the Powys emergency services to undertake radiation monitoring at the site of the crash of a US aircraft at Capel-y-ftin in February 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Under regulations governing the guarding of crashed military aircraft in the United Kingdom, access to a crash site is permitted only to specifically authorised personnel.

Aldermaston

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of *(a)* the replacement and *(b)* installation costs of an alternative pipework system to the zone one ductwork plant area A90.1 in the building complex A90 at Aldermaston, is attributable to an ambiguous specification; what percentage is attributable to bad workmanship in (i) manufacture or (ii) installation; and what steps he is taking to recover any costs from the contractor.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Details of the A90 ductwork problems were given in evidence by my Department to the Select Committee on Defence and published in the reports "The progress of the Trident Programme" 5th of Session 1988-89 and 9th of Session 1989-90 (HC374 and HC237). All necessary remedial work has been completed and a thorough investigation by the appropriate authorities has failed to produce any evidence to support action for recovery of any costs from the contractor.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether recent leaks of gases/solutions from prefabricated pipework in building A90/A91 at Aldermaston was due to the pipework *(a)* not complying with the contract specification, *(b)* not being capable of withstanding the waste material passing through and *(c)* not being inspected before installation; whether the safety inspectorate approved the installation; and what steps are being taken to ensure that faulty pipework does not create an unsafe workplace for the operators.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There has been no leak of radioactive material from building A90 or A91; neither building is yet in use. During commissioning tests using simulated liquid waste corrosion has been discovered in pipework which is wholly contained within building A91. A detailed technical investigation is now in progress to discover the cause and extent of the problem. The installation will not be brought into use until we are assured of its safe operation.

Equipment Exhibitions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has held since November 1990 with *(a)* Members of Parliament and *(b)* others concerning the policy of not releasing lists of countries invited to or attending defence equipment exhibitions.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have discussed this subject with representatives of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade at a meeting attended by some hon. Members.

Gulf War

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what discrimination was exercised by coalition air forces in their attacks on Iraqi conventional power stations;

(2) what proportion of Iraqi conventional power stations were bombed by coalition air forces during the Gulf war;

(3) what was Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the bombing of Iraqi conventional power stations during the Gulf war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Coalition forces attacked Iraqi power stations in order to disrupt Iraq's military command control and communications, and other military capabilities such as air defence radars. These attacks were carefully planned to minimise the risk of causing civilian casualties and collateral damage. It is believed that over half Iraq's major power stations were damaged by coalition forces during the Gulf conflict.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department defines *(a)* a sub-strategic nuclear weapon and *(b)* a tactical nuclear weapon.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD would understand both terms to refer to those weapons which provide the link between conventional forces and strategic nuclear forces in the spectrum of deterrence.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the types of currently deployed NATO land-based short-range nuclear weapons that have an operational service life that extends beyond the mid-1990s.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom's ground-launched short-range nuclear systems currently comprise Lance and nuclear-capable artillery. Only the artillery (capable of firing nuclear warheads supplied by the United States) will have an operational life that extends beyond the mid-1990s. Questions relating to the nuclear systems of our NATO allies are a matter for their Governments.

Missiles

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will outline his Department's policy towards restricting the European deployment of NATO tactical air-to-surface missiles to time of crisis only;

(2) what decisions have been taken regarding NATO deployment plans for tactical air-to-surface missiles;

(3) what are the deployment implications for land-based short-range nuclear weapons of the deployment of tactical air-to-surface missiles by NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We fully support the alliance's policy of keeping nuclear forces up to date where necessary and based in Europe in peacetime. But no decisions have been taken on NATO deployment in tactical air-to-surface missiles. As for currently deployed systems, the London declaration identifies a significantly reduced role for sub-strategic systems of the shortest range, and looks forward to new negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on the reduction of short-range nuclear forces.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when a decision will be taken on the United Kingdom tactical air-to-surface missiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Consideration of replacement systems for our WE 177 free-fall bombs is continuing. The House will be informed as soon as a decision is taken.

JP-233 Bomb

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the JP-233 bomb will complete its effective in-service life.

(2) what is his Department's policy towards the replacement of the JP-233 bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: We expect the JP-233 bomb to remain in service until well after the turn of the century. We will consider its replacement at the appropriate time as part of the Department's normal equipment planning process.

Combat Training

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards the balance between low and medium-level combat training conducted by the RAF, in light of the experience of the Gulf war.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are still considering the outcome of the air campaign in the Gulf and the conclusions to be drawn from it.

Armament Sites

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hours of inspection are allowed under existing disarmament treaty arrangements for *(a)* British and American observers to visit Soviet armament sites and *(b)* Soviet observers to visit British and American armament sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom has incurred rights and duties of inspection of military sites under two main agreements to which it is a signatory: the Vienna document 1990 on confidence and security-building measures in Europe, and the CFE treaty, which has not yet been ratified.

Section VIII of the Vienna document sets out compliance and verification provisions, under which the United Kingdom and Soviet Union are obliged to accept evaluation visits. Each such visit must take place within a single working day and last no more than 12 hours.

When ratified, the inspection protocol of the CFE treaty will allow inspection teams of participating states to spend up to 48 hours at sites notified as containing equipment limited by the treaty. There will also be provision for challenge inspections which may last up to 24 hours.

Although the United Kingdom is not a party to the INF treaty, the Soviet Union has the right to conduct inspections of sites within the United Kingdom to verify the elimination of US missiles. Procedures are set out fully in the associated protocol on inspections. For base-line, close-out and short-notice inspections, inspectors may spend up to 24 hours at a facility they are inspecting; this may be extended by up to a further eight hours if the inspected site agrees. For elimination inspections, because of the number of missiles to be eliminated, there is no specified time limit for each inspection.

The equivalent rights and duties of the United States Government under agreements to which it is a party are a matter for the US Government.

Civil Servants

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what pre-retirement courses are currently offered to civil servants in the Gosport and Portsmouth area; and if there are plans to change the existing arrangements.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Two pre-retirement courses are run by the Ministry of Defence in the Portsmouth area each year; there are no current plans to change this. In addition, one will be held in the Gosport area in the near future. Anyone who is unable to attend one of these courses may be included in a course held at another location.

Trident

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of constructing *(a)* four Trident submarines and *(b)* three Trident submarines over the next five-year period from the start of the financial year; and if he will give revenue running costs where applicable.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government remain committed to a four-boat Trident submarine force. Whilst it is not our practice to provide detailed forecasts of project expenditure, I can confirm that the estimated cost of constructing the four Trident submarines over the next five years is about £1,400 million.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Ministry of Defence spent some £3·94 million in the financial year 1990-91 on management consultancy contracts placed centrally. Details are listed. Computer consultancy contracts form, in many cases, part of wider computer procurement and support contracts, but it is estimated that consultancy contracts to a value of £14·34 million were placed in 1990-91. Details of individual contracts could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Management consultancy contracts let in financial year 1990-91

Firm	*Subject*
Anderson Consulting	Defining a cost management system for RAF logistics
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	The Joint Service Job Evaluation Review
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Specialized mortgage schemes for Service personnel
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Military Survey quality initiative total quality programme
Kienbaum Unternehmensberatung	A study into the presentation of British Forces in Germany, to the German public
Marketing Consultancy Network Ltd.	Contractorisation of AWE—Assistance with staff communications
National Radiological Protection Board	Nuclear Test Veterans Report
P A Consulting Group	A study of the customer interactions with micro-electronics research unit.
P E Inbucon Ltd.	Tri-service resettlement review
Price Waterhouse	Advice to MoD in respect of the creation of the DRA
D Quilter	RAF ground training review
T Q M International Ltd.	Total quality management for the Royal Naval Aircraft Repair Organization

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1990-91 the MOD invested some £12 million in specific energy-saving measures throughout the defence estate. Additional sums which are incorporated as part of major general works programmes are not separately identifiable. Figures for earlier years are not readily available. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Staff devoted wholly or mainly to energy management in the Ministry of Defence represented about 15 person-years of effort in 1990-91. A much larger number of personnel were employed as energy wardens at units and establishments on a part-time basis. The proportion of energy wardens' time devoted to energy management is not separately recorded.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has carried out 346 energy audits over the last five years. It is not practicable to summarise the findings of this number of audits without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. Expenditure on consumption of non-operational fuel on the defence estate in 1989-90, the latest available, was as follows:

	£000
Electricity	159,989
Gas	39,868
Solid fuel	9,576
Liquid fuel	42,854

For details of expenditure in earlier years and other available information I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 5 June 1990 columns *428-29*.

Nuclear Installations, Iraq

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 April, *Official Report*, column *164*, to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), what are the results of the inspections of Iraq's nuclear facilities with regard to radioactive contamination.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The International Atomic Energy Agency has not yet made public the detailed findings of its mid-May inspection of the Tuwaitha reactor sites.

Residential Property

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in respect of which RAF air stations other than RAF Leeming his Department has acquired dwellings with the agreement of their owners.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the MOD's noise compensation policy was reviewed in 1985, dwellings have been acquired with the consent of the owners in the vicinity of the following military airfields where the qualifying criteria were met:

RAF Stornoway
RAF Leeming
RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Fairford
RNAS Yeovilton

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in respect of which RAF air stations other than RAF Leeming his Department has paid injurious affection compensation to nearby home owners on account of depreciation in value caused by noise disturbance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the MOD's noise compensation policy was reviewed in 1985, injurious affection compensation has been paid to home owners living in the vicinity of the following military airfields where the qualifying criteria were met:

RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Leuchars
RAF Cottesmore

RAF Coningsby
RAF Marsham
RAF Wattisham
RAF Honington
RAF Leeming
RNAS Yeovilton

Medical Services, Kuwait

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what checks are now kept of the British Army medical team working unit at the Ahmadi hospital in Kuwait; what is their turnover rate; and what plans he has for the monitoring of health of those in the Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Engineers working in the Ahmadi area, or who have worked in the Ahmadi area, over the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Full medical cover is provided for all United Kingdom military personnel in Kuwait, including checks on lung function for those in the area of the fires. Medical personnel will return to the United Kingdom with remaining British units. Periodic medical checks will continue to be conducted on service personnel as a matter of routine.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library all the public statements of Colonel Brooke of the Royal Engineers on the subject of service men's health in Kuwait.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the course of his duties Lt. Col. Brooke has given considerable public advice on the hazards of unexploded ordnance in Kuwait and has also been interviewed on a number of occasions about the work of the Royal Engineers there. Transcripts are not available as the MOD does not require detailed records of all public statements made by members of the armed forces.

The Gulf (Pollution)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions he has formed from the air samples collected by the RAF Hercules on 28 March about the deviation from the norm of radiation of the sun.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This is a matter for the Meteorological Office under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive of the Meteorological Office, Dr. J. T. Houghton, to reply direct to the hon. Member.

NATO and WTO

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers, seamen and airmen are currently under arms in NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, respectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on 8 May 1991, *Official Report*, column *506*.

Ordnance Services, Kuwait

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the work of Royal Ordnance plc and 21 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron, Royal Engineers, in Kuwait.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not for the Ministry of Defence to comment on the work of a private company. As for 21 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 13 May (*Official Report*, column *58*).

The Gulf

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for deployments of British forces in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Further to my right hon. Friend's statement of 27 March at column 482, it has been decided to redeploy the battle group currently conducting exercises in Kuwait. The major part of the battle group, which comprises 2 Royal Anglian and supporting elements, will move to Al Jubayl. Two companies of 2 Royal Anglian will then relieve 1 Kings Own Scottish Borderers, who have been employed on security duties in support of the logistic support group. 1 Kings Own Scottish Borderers will return to the United Kingdom in the middle of June.

The logistic support group is planned to withdraw at the end of July, and 2 Royal Anglian will return at the same time. Until then, those elements of 2 Royal Anglian not providing security at Al Jubayl will remain in Kuwait to provide further reassurance to the Kuwaitis. We are also discussing with the Kuwaiti Government our defence relationship in the longer term, in particular what assistance the UUnited Kingdom could provide in the rebuilding of the Kuwaiti armed forces.

The squadron of GR1 Tornados stationed in Bahrain has now returned to RAF Bruggen in Germany. The Armilla patrol continues to provide a frigate/destroyer presence in the region; and United Kingdom mine counter-measures vessels are carrying out mine clearance off the coast of Kuwait as part of a multinational mine clearance force.

Wind Tunnels

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) to what extent the wind tunnels at Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, and the motion simulator sites have been relegated to the Defence Research Agency; and to what extent he has reserved authority over these facilities;

(2) to what extent the Bedford airfield has been relegated to the Defence Research Agency; and to what extent he has reserved authority over the site.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* Ownership of all land occupied by the Defence Research Agency (DRA), including Bedford airfield, the wind tunnel site at Thurleigh, and the motion simulator site, remains vested with the Secretary of State for Defence in his capacity as owner of the DRA. Decisions as to the future of these, and other DRA sites, are a matter for the Secretary of State in consultation with the chief executive of the DRA.

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each year since 1979-80, and for 1991 to date, the number of low-flying sorties that have taken place by aircraft from Royal Air Force Finningley; and what number occured after dusk.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 May 1991]*: Central records are not held in a form which would enable the information requested to be provided. However, no low-flying sorties are flown out of RAF Finningley after dusk.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 4 June 1991

TRANSPORT

Nuclear Material

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that the arrangements for a police escort for the road transportation of nuclear products are rigorously enforced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Movements of radioactive materials by road must comply with the Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Great Britain) Regulations 1974 and Amendment Regulations 1985.

There is no requirement in these regulations for police escorts to accompany the road transport of radioactive materials.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many journeys involving the transport of nuclear waste there were on the road system in Northumberland in the years 1988, 1989, 1990, and the first three months in the current year;

(2) how many times nuclear waste has been transported along the A1 between British Nuclear Fuels, Sellafield, Cumbria, and Dounreay, Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many times nuclear waste has been transported along the A69 between British Nuclear Fuels, Sellafield, Cumbria, and Dounreay, Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not collect data of the kind requested.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the numbers and dates of road accidents on the A69 involving the transportation of nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: There have been no accidents reportable under the Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Great Britain) Regulations 1974 involving vehicles carrying radioactive materials, but I am aware of a minor road traffic accident at Hexham on 19 April this year to a vehicle carrying miscellaneous items which included a package of low-level nuclear waste. This did not cause any damage to the package or its contents.

Motorways

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects that section of the M1 which passes through Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire to be cleared of litter.

Mr. Chope: Litter clearance is carried out continuously on this section of motorway, with daily removal of large individual items of debris.

Rail Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether the Government now intend to make subsidies available to any InterCity services which might otherwise be jeopardised as a result of impending privatisation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he intends taking in the run-up to privatisation of the InterCity services of British Rail; if he will ensure that these branches of the intercity network which do not make a profit, are not run down by British Rail, or transferred to provincial services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No decision has yet been taken on the structure of a privatised British Rail. Detailed questions about transfers of services between parts of BR, or about the subsidy regime for particular services, must await that decision.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with his Irish counterparts concerning the implications for rail services between London and Holyhead arising from the Government's plans to privatise railway services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no discussions about the implications of privatisation for London-Holyhead rail services. He has had recent correspondence with his Irish counterpart about the Crewe-Holyhead line, in the context of channel tunnel services and the European Commission's proposals for a high-speed rail network.

Freight Facilities Grant Scheme

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the main changes he intends to make to the freight facilities grant scheme: and when the changes will come into operation.

Mr. Freeman: With the agreement of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, the following changes will be made:

(i) a tripling in the price which the Government are proposing to pay for environmental benefits. The ceiling for grant is to be increased to £1 per lorry-sensitive mile from the current level of 34p, and will be revalued for inflation in future years;

(ii) virtually all single-carriageway roads will be considered environmentally-sensitive, rather than the current narrower definition of unclassified, urban; and scenic roads;

(iii) most urban dual carriageway journeys will count for grant;

(iv) urban roads will be given a 50 per cent. higher weighting than other sensitive roads;

(v) the grant rules will be revised to allow for the eligibility in principle of inter-modal systems;

(vi) schemes of exceptional environmental benefit will no longer be restricted to a maximum rate of grant of 60 per cent;

(vii) in appraising a grant application, the stream of future environmental benefits will be calculated on a discounted basis, so that they are expressed in the same way as costs, which are currently expressed on that basis;

(viii) the period of appraisal will remain generally at 10 years, but with flexibility to apply a lesser or greater period if appropriate; and to consider substitute flows of traffic as meeting the grant conditions over the life of the project where appropriate;

(ix) 5 per cent. of grant payable may be retained until monitoring returns showing that a scheme is operating satisfactorily;

(x) the grant rules will be amended to permit the Department(s) to take a charge on assets in particular circumstances;

(xi) greater publicity will be given to the scheme.

The new criteria on payment of grant will be introduced immediately.

Shipowners

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has made and what reports he has published concerning the comparative costs borne by United Kingdom shipowners for comparable standards of manning and safety under flags of convenience and flags of Commonwealth states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The Department of Transport has, from time to time, commissioned information on crew cost comparisons, from ship managers and consultants, in order to help inform policy. Such information has not generally been published. The hon. Member may, however, be aware that the report of the joint working party on British shipping, published last year, included the attached table of case-specific figures, supplied by the General Council of British Shipping.

Appendix 3.1 Some Comparative Crew-cost Options (30,000 dwt. Bulk Carrier)—1990 (£)

	OPTION A —UK officers —UK ratings (all UK rates)	*OPTION B —UK officers (offshore rates) —Filipino ratings (ITF approved rates)*	*OPTION C —4 UK key officers (offshore rates) —6 Indian officers —Filipino ratings (all ITF approved rates)*	*OPTION D —4 UK key officers (offshore rates) —6 Indian officers (ITF approved rates) —Hong Kong/China ratings (HK/PRC rates)*	*OPTION E —Filipino officers —Filipino ratings (all ITF approved rates)*	*OPTION F —Indian officers —Indian ratings (all ITF approved rates)*
Officers wages and leave	314,064	282,435	217,589	217,589	147,340	154,584
Ratings wages and leave including overtime	277,128	95,425	95,425	81,803	95,425	120,654
Crew travel	59,400	43,200	39,600	40,650	29,700	46,200
Manning expenses	4,770	6,083	7,000	8,922	7,376	7,635
Annual crew cost	655,362	427,123	359,614	348,964	279,841	329,073
Daily crew cost	1,796	1,171	986	956	767	902

Notes:
Total crew complement: 22 = 10 officers + 12 ratings.
Tours of duty: British—4 months.
Asian/Eastern—8 months.
Leave: British (United Kingdom rates)—12 days per month.
British (Offshore)—10 days per month.
Asian/Eastern—6 days per month.
Overtime: assumes mean of 100 hours per month.
Salaries paid in: British—£.
Others—US$ (at 1·70 = £1).

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his marine pollution control unit has taken to monitor *(a)* the DESMI Engineering contract for heavy duty skimmers, *(b)* the Alba International contract in relation to the clean-up of Musallamiyah bay and *(c)* the Alba International contract for the clean-up of the coastline of Karan island.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* In respect of the Department of the Environment contract with DESMI Engineering, the marine pollution control unit acting on behalf of DOE, checked that the heavy duty oil skimmers were in full working order prior to their despatch to Bahrain.

As advised in my reply of 15 April at column *1*, both of the contracts with Alba International were between that company and the International Maritime Organisation, which advises that the work has been completed satisfactorily. The MPCU had no monitoring role.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funds the United Kingdom gives to the International Maritime Organisation Gulf fund.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The Departments of Transport and of the Environment have each made a single £500,000 contribution to the International Maritime Organisation's Gulf oil pollution disaster fund.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement about the review of the financial conditions for legal aid which were announced in November 1990.

The Solicitor-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department is publishing a consultation paper today canvassing the options for funding civil legal aid with particular reference to those people who are currently not eligible for legal aid. Copies of the paper have been laid in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. The consultation period will run until the end of October and no decisions will be taken before then. A separate consultation paper will shortly be issued in Scotland to take account of the different position there.

Further stages of the review will cover legal aid in criminal and matrimonial cases and the green form advice and assistance scheme. Separate consultation papers will be issued for these stages.

THE ARTS

Cash Limits

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give details of any proposed changes to the cash and running costs limits for his Department's votes in 1991-92.

Mr. Renton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary summer supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XII, vote 4, is to be increased by £106,000 from £2,176,000 to £2,282,000. Additional provision is being transferred to meet the costs of certain services provided by the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Department of the Environment (Property Holdings). There is no net effect on the planning total.

The running costs limit for the Office of Arts and Libraries will be increased by £106,000 from £2,136,000 to £2,242,000.

Grants (Scotland)

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the amount of grant paid to the Scottish national orchestra, Scottish chamber orchestra, Scottish Baroque ensemble, Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet for each of the financial years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and projected for the year 1991-92.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The information requested is as follows:—

	Royal Scottish orchestra £	*Scottish chamber orchestra* £	*Scottish Baroque ensemble* £	*Scottish Opera* £	*Scottish Ballet* £
1988-89	1,444,000	636,350	91,250	3,260,000	1,370,000
1989-90	1,473,000	676,000	91,800	3,357,000	1,407,000
1990-91	1,639,700	709,000	99,500	3,669,000	1,525,000
1991-92	1,735,000	755,000	107,000	3,935,000	1,640,869

Some additional moneys have yet to be allocated in 1991-92 by the Scottish Arts Council from the enhancement fund and for touring; the companies above will be among the recipients of these funds.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the annual amount of grants to arts organisations and events in the cities of Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh for the financial years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and projected for the year 1991-92.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Scottish Arts Council grants to client organisations are as follows. Information relating to local authority grants is not readily available.

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
Aberdeen	147,557	160,543	135,287	180,.000
Dundee	332,809	371,520	416,616	399,285
Edinburgh	2,762,526	2,857,636	3,176,717	3,101,000
Glasgow	7,569,290	7,894,700	8,662,421	9,119,569

Notes:

(i) The figures above include grants to the three national companies based in Glasgow and the one national company based in Edinburgh. These companies are required, as a condition of grant, to tour throughout Scotland.

(ii) They also include other touring companies, and galleries producing touring exhibitions, that are predominantly based in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

(iii) Figures for 1991-92 are based on budget plans and exclude funds yet to be allocated.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* No energy audits have been carried out in my Department, but surveys to improve energy efficiency have been, and are being, undertaken.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his office in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Investment to improve energy efficiency has been the responsibility of the Property Services Agency and the major occupying Departments within the two buildings in which my Department is located. Staff are encouraged, however, to follow simple but effective no-cost measures to help reduce energy consumption.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The Office of Arts and Libraries has no dedicated energy managers but is advised in such matters by the Cabinet Office.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Woolwich Case

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what grounds the Inland Revenue lost the Woolwich case in the High Court;

(2) how many judges in *(a)* the High Court, *(b)* the Court of Appeal and *(c)* the House of Lords did not agree with the original Inland Revenue contention that there was no double taxation in the Woolwich case;

(3) on what grounds the Inland Revenue won the Woolwich case in the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Maples: The High Court held that the Building Societies Regulations 1986 went beyond the scope of the

enabling powers, to the extent that they sought to bring into account payments made by building societies in transitional periods to 6 April 1986. The Court of Appeal reversed that decision.

The House of Lords dismissed by a majority of four to one the Woolwich's principal argument in its appeal against the Court of Appeal's decision and confirmed that the enabling legislation did authorise the Inland Revenue to made regulations covering transitional periods to 6 April 1986. But the Lords held unanimously that there was no power to apply 1985-86 tax rates to payments in the transitional periods.

Over the course of the litigation seven judges found that the enabling legislation authorised the Revenue to make regulations bringing into charge payments of interest in transitional periods to 6 April 1986; two found that it did not.

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate in total how much the Inland Revenue received from building societies in 1985-86 and 1986-87; and how much will not be repaid as a consequence of clause 50 of the Finance Bill being approved by the House.

Mr. Maples: Receipts of income tax and corporation tax from building societies were £3,025 million in 1985-86 and £3,067 million in 1986-87. An estimated £130 million of 1986-87 receipts would be repaid if clause 50 was not approved; receipts of about £20 million in later years would also be repaid, together with accumulated interest amounting to about £100 million at the beginning of this financial year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many building societies, on or after 25 October 1990, asked for return of the tax which was in dispute; and how many received a written acknowledgement before the Budget speech in 1991.

Mr. Maples: It would not be appropriate to provide information about the tax affairs of individual taxpayers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what Treasury or Inland Revenue estimates of extra or accelerated payment of tax by building societies from *(a)* the changed tax arrangements and *(b)* the transitional arrangements were published in (i) 1985 and (ii) 1986.

Mr. Maples: The 1985-86 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" showed the effect of the building society measures on Exchequer revenue in 1985-86 to be nil and estimated the effect on tax liabilities for the first full year to be a reduction of £20 million in societies' liability to corporation tax.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a complete collection of Treasury press notices, ministerial speeches and pronouncements, and debates on the Floor of the House and in Committee on the change in taxation payments by building societies.

Mr. Maples: I have placed a collection of this information in the Library.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent by the Central Office of Information in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the Central Office of Information in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Maples: This question falls within the scope of the policy announced in Cm. 1263: arrangements have therefore been made for the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to respond direct. Copies of the letter will be placed in the House Library and with the Public Information Office.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent by Her Majesty's Treasury in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by Her Majesty's Treasury in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. Maples: The expenditure in the financial year 1990-91 is estimated to be some £5,902,000, which includes some £5,245,600 by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency. Figures include the cost of development studies, which in turn include the cost of associated hardware and software; the later items are not separately identifiable.

The following management and computer consultancy contracts were awarded by Her Majesty's Treasury in the financial year 1990-91.

Contracts awarded:	
A Bobsin	Office services project
A. Morris	Personnel project
Admiral	Quality Management
AIAI	Consultancy Support
AMP Systems Lts	Systems upgrade
AMTEC	Consultancy Support
Anderson Consultants	ITIL Project Support
Ashford Associates	Development Support
B. Traynor	Health project
BBC Central Directorates	Press office project
BDO Binder Hamlyn	Auditing contract
BIS	CRAMM Project Support
BIS	Consultancy Support
Brameur	Consultancy Support
Brian Bolton	Standards Support
Brian Farrington Ltd	Purchasing and Supply
British Computer Society	ITIL Project Support
British Telecomm	GTN Support
C. Cubed	Consultancy Support
C. Makemson	GOSIP Project Support
CAMTEC	Consultancy Support
Cannon Rosen and Co.	Personnel project
CAPITA Group Ltd.	Pursuit project
Catering Consultants	Pay division project
CCMS	ITIL Project Support
Cego Mackrotest	Market Research
Chipboards	IT Support
City University	Study in Estimating
City University	Study in Management
Civil Service College	Training Support
CMGBIS	SSADM Project Support

Coopers and Lybrand	Purchasing research
Coopers and Lybrand	Management policy project
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Coding Systems for Purchasing
D. B. I. Associates	Development Support
D. R. Moss	Programming Support
DAE University of Cambridge	Capital gains and balance of payments
Data Dictionary	SSADM Project Support
Data Systems	Consultancy Support
DCMS	Network Management Support
Delta Dimensions Ltd.	Purchasing Database
Deuce	CRAMM Project Support
DMW Group	GTS Project Support
Dr. D. Helm	Economics project
Dr. E. Burgess	Personnel project
DTI	Management policy project
EFD	Consultancy Support.
EOSYS	Consultancy Support.
ERA Technology	Systems Interface.
Ernst & Young	GTS Project support.
Ernst & Young	GEMINI Marketing.
Ernst & Young	Methods Harmonisation.
Ernst & Young	ITIL Project support.
Fischer & Lorenz	Consultancy Support.
Format Desktop Publishing	SSADM Project Support.
Frank Griffiths Associates	Comments on DTp's Action Plan.
Frank Griffiths Associates	Highways Consultancy Commissions.
Frank Griffiths Association	Purchasing research.
G. Hughes	Development work on Project Database.
Graftondale	Open Systems Support.
GTP Sales	Telecomms Update.
Healy R. Baker	Accounting research project.
Hedra Ltd.	IT Review Support.
Hoskyns	Consultancy Support.
HWPH Ltd.	Nursery project.
ICI C & P Headquarter	Economics project.
ICL	Use of OSNET telecommunications system.
Ideas Int.	Database Support.
IDU	ITIL Project Support.
IDU	Infrastructure Support.
Industrial Training Service	Management policy project.
Industrial Training Service	Management policy project.
Info Strategy	GOSIP Project Support.
Infologistix	ITIL Project Support.
Info. Design	ITIL Project Support.
Ingham Partnership	SSADM Project Support.
Ingham Partnership	User Interface Project.
Ingham Partnership	Consultancy Support.
Insieme	ITIL Project Support.
Institute of Manpower Studies	Personnel project.
J. D. Barnett	Office services project.
J. Gammon	Use of private sector purchasing agent.
J. K. Microelectric	Consultancy Support.
J. Westgate	Consultancy Support.
K. Baldwin	Consultancy support
K. P. G. Computer Support Services Ltd.	Computer project
K. W. Gray	Personnel project
Kermon Associates	Consultancy support
Kermon Associates	GTS project support
Kiddy & Co.	Account management
KPMG Peat Marwick	Auditing contract for IBM 43/81
Lancare	Check of telecommunications links
Logica	Consultancy support
Logica	GEMINI project support
Logica	Capacity planning
M. Brech	Management policy project
M. J. O. Willacy	Purchasing adviser
M. N. Pickett	Estate management
M. W. Townley	Financial institutions project
MARI Group	Consultancy support
Masons	Consultancy support
Model Systems	Consultancy support
Mrs. C. Megan	Pensions project
Ms. S. Horder	Personnel project
Network Telecomms	GOSIP project support
Nolan & Norton	SSADM project support
Nottingham University	CSCW support
OASIS Limited	Pursuit project
Open Systems Foundation	Open Systems support
Open Systems Foundation	Training support
OSI Services	GTS project support
Ovum Ltd.	Consultancy support
Oxford Economic Research	Economics project
P. Chambers	Personnel project
P. G. Davis	Pensions project
P. N. Parry	Guidance on works projects
PA Consultancy	Consultancy support
PA Consultancy	ITIL project support
PA Consultancy	GDN project support
Pat Bacon	Pursuit project
Peat Marwick McLintock	Management policy project
Peter Hyde	ITIL project support
Pi Limited	Purchasing database
Pink Elephant	ITIL project support
Pratten	Consultancy contract
PRAXIS	Framework support
Price Waterhouse Association	Privatisation project
Protocol Int.	ITIL project support
PSC Int.	GOSIP project support
QBS Ltd.	ITIL project support
R. H. Willmott	EPHOS Project Support
R. H. Willmott	GOSIP Project Support
R. L. Harris	Marketing Support
R. M. O'Connor	Standards Support
R. Morgan	Economics research
Roger Tym and Partners	Aid and export finance project
Salford	Development Support
SEMA	GOSIP Project Support
SEMA	Consultancy Support
Sensitive Visual Aids	Braille Support
Softlab	ITIL Project Support
Soutron	Consultancy Support
Strand S. T. Ltd.	Consultancy Support
Systems Associated	Consultancy Support
T. C. F. Howard	Personnel project
T. McCormack	Personnel project
T. W. Olle Associates	Development Support
Telecomputting Ltd.	Automated job assembly consultancy
Theo Goddard	Consultancy Support
Touche Ross Ltd.	Consultancy Support
Transform	Pay Project
Transtech Consultancy Service	Personnel project
Trove	GOSIP Project Support
Turing Institute	Development Support
W. E. Townsend	Personnel project
Woodway	Consultancy Support
Workplace Nurseries	Nursery project
X-Tel Services	CSCW Support

Key to abbreviations

ITIL	IT Infrastructure Library
SSADM	Structured Analysis and Design Methodology
GOSIP	Government Open Systems Interconnection Profile
CRAMM	CCTA Risk Analysis and Management Methodology
EPHOS	European Procurement Handbook for Open Systems
GTN	Government Telecommunications Network
GTS	Government Telecommunications System
OSI	Open Systems Interconnection
CSCW	Computer Supported Co-operative Working
GDN	Government Data Network

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent by the Royal Mint in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or

computer consultancy contract awarded by the Royal Mint in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Maples: This question falls within the scope of the policy announced in Cm. 1263: arrangements have therefore been made for the deputy master and chief executive of the Royal Mint to respond direct. Copies of the letter will be placed in the House Library and with the Public Information Office.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent by HMSO in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by HMSO in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Maples: This question falls within the scope of the policy announced in Cm. 1263: arrangements have therefore been made for the chief executive of HMSO to reply direct. Copies of the letter will be placed in the House Library and with the Public Information Office.

Business Premises (South-East Counties)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total value of *(a)* small, *(b)* large and *(c)* all business premises in each south-eastern county (i) before and (ii) after the recent revaluation which coincided with the introduction of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Maude: The information is as follows:

£ million

	Small properties		*Large properties*		*All properties*	
County	*1973 Rateable Value*	*1990 Rateable Value*	*1973 Rateable Value*	*1990 Rateable Value*	*1973 Rateable Value*	*1990 Rateable Value*
Bedfordshire	5	42	38	301	42	343
Berkshire	4	46	66	639	70	685
Buckinghamshire	4	44	45	427	49	471
East Sussex	7	71	27	247	34	317
Essex	13	120	80	717	92	837
Hampshire	11	113	80	695	91	808
Hertfordshire	7	67	89	698	96	765
Isle of Wight	1	15	3	37	5	53
Kent	12	124	63	580	75	705
Oxfordshire	4	45	31	326	35	371
Surrey	7	76	64	642	71	718
West Sussex	6	57	39	379	44	436
London Boroughs and City of London	112	1,031	1,138	8,983	1,250	10,014

The table gives rateable values before and after revaluation for all properties in the rating lists as at 1 April 1990. Small properties are taken to be those with a 1990 rateable value below £15,000 in London, and below £10,000 elsewhere.

CIVIL SERVICE

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what was the total amount spent by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the OMCS in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. Renton: The OMCS spent £747,500 on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases, in 1990-91. The management and computer consultancy contracts let by the OMCS during 1990-91 are as follows:

Firm and Assignment

Coopers and Lybrand—Informing decisions on advising Departments and Agencies about the evaluation of Agencies' performance.

Computer Answers Ltd.—Design and write database system.

Daton Systems Ltd.—Design and write database system.

DBI Associates—Feasibility study for replacement computer system.

KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock—Evaluation of senior staff training and development programme.

KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock—Evaluation of implementation of Management Charter Initiative guidelines.

Linbert Spencer—Development of equal opportunity recruitment guidance pack.

Nottingham Professional Development Services—Production of an access training manual and other training materials.

Oracle Corporation UK Ltd.—Programming support in development of recruitment processing system.

Pearn Kandola Downs—Development of equal opportunity learning programme and training materials.

Praxis Systems—Assistance in the analysis, design and testing of software and production of user manual.

Psytech Ltd.—Further development of computerised system to support use of psychometric testing in recruitment schemes.

Raindrop Data Systems Ltd.—Design and write database system.

Taylor Stewart Associates—Development of training material on managing people from diverse groups.

Trident Computer Services—Design and write database system.

The only consultancy contract let by an executive agency was that with DBI Associates, let by the occupational health service.

HEALTH

Cigarette Advertising

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the statutory provisions relating to the EC's powers concerning cigarette advertising.

Mr. Dorrell: The Commission is proposing a new draft directive on tobacco advertising, the text of which is not yet available. Previous drafts have been based on article 100A of the treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total level of expenditure on pay for nurses, in cash and constant prices, in each year since 1973.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested for the financial years since NHS reorganisation on 1 April 1974 is shown in the table.

The level of expenditure in 1989-90 reflects the transfer of many senior nurse managers from the nursing and midwifery pay structure to general senior management pay categories, a planned reduction in the overall number of students in training and other factors.

NHS expenditure on salaries and wages—nursing and midwifery staff

	Total salaries and wages costs	
	£000 (cash)	*£000 (at 1989-90 prices)*
1974-75	761,521	3,201,069
1975-7[illegible]	985,114	3,298,763
1976-[illegible]	1,122,979	3,311,980
1977-[illegible]	1,220,263	3,165,533
19[illegible]-79	1,375,652	3,218,475
[illegible]-80	1,679,338	3,367,308
[illegible]80-81	2,338,084	3,961,953
[illegible]981-82	2,554,240	3,947,322
1982-83	2,747,676	3,964,759
1983-84	2,858,812	3,942,959
1984-85	3,074,483	4,035,413
1985-86	3,261,598	4,059,776
1986-87	3,566,025	4,291,889
1987-88	4,013,321	4,580,604
1988-89	4,750,229	5,052,819
1989-90	5,028,195	5,028,195

Annual accounts of regional and disrict health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. (Predecessor authorities for the years prior to 1982-83).

NOTES TO THE TABLE

1. The figures are gross pay costs including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions. Expenditure on non-NHS (agency, etc.) staff is also included.
2. The figures for earlier years have been expressed at 1989-90 prices by the use of Gross Domestic Product deflators.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the names of those people nominated to be chairs of second-wave NHS trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: An announcement of the names of the chairmen of second-wave NHS trusts will be made after the trusts have been formally established.

Intestinal and Stomach Cancer

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence his Department has on links between diet and the incidence of intestinal and stomach cancer, with particular reference to the consumption of red meat.

Mr. Dorrell: Comparisons of diet and the incidence of intestinal cancer in different groups have prompted hypotheses of a possible increase in risk from the consumption of red meat or its fat content, but the evidence is inconclusive.

The Department is not aware of any suggested link between the consumption of red meat and an increased risk of stomach cancer.

Vaccines

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reported reactions there have been to vaccines in the last year for which figures are available; which vaccines were reported; what were the reactions; and whether any of these resulted in permanent disabilities.

Mr. Dorrell: There were 748 reports of suspected adverse reactions to vaccines in 1990; some of these reports may have featured more than one vaccine and/or more than one reaction. The report of a suspected adverse reaction does not necessarily imply a causal relationship.

The following vaccines were involved:—

Anthrax
BCG
Diphtheria
Hepatitis B
Influenza
Measles
Measles/mumps/rubella
Polio
Rubella
Tetanus
Typhoid
Whooping cough
Yellow fever

The reactions reported fell into the following categories:—

Application site disorders
Arrythmias
Auditory and vestibular
Autonomic nervous system
Bleeding and clotting disorders
Cardiovascular disorders
Central nervous system
Collagen disorders
Endocrine disorders
Fetal disorders
Gastro-intestinal disorders
General disorders
Hepatic disorders
Intra-cardiac disorders
Male reproductive disorders
Metabolic and Nutritional
Muscular Skeletal disorders
Other special senses
Peripheral vascular disorders
Psychiatric disorders
Resistance mechanism
Respiratory disorders
Skin and appendages
Urinary disorders
Visual disorders
White blood cell disorders

A number of the reports indicated that, at the time of reporting, the patient had not yet recovered. A number of these patients have subsequently recovered.

Cash Limits

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made to the cash limits and running cost limits for his Department in 1991-92.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class XIII, vote 1 (hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England) will be increased by £162,196,000 from £16,247,836,000 to £16,410,032,000. This increase allows for an additional £157,719,000 to help provide, from 1 April 1991, for the pay awards recommended in the 1991 reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine, and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 31 January 1991 and for a transfer of £4,758,000 from class XI, votes 2 (Department of Education and Science, higher and further education) and 3 (Department of Education and Science, student awards, loans and compensation payments) in respect of public sector higher education. These increases are partially offset by transfers of £191,000 to class XVI, vote 8 (hospital and community health services, family practitioner services (part) and other health services, Wales) in respect of occupational therapy training and £90,000 to class XIII, vote 3 (see below) in respect of a child health care initiative.

The cash limit for class XIII, vote 3 (Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be increased by £43,118,000 from £683,351,000 to £726,469,000. The increase provides for £1,281,000 to meet, from 1 April 1991, the review body recommendations mentioned above; for £42,000,000 for grants to haemophiliacs infected with HIV; for a net transfer of £847,000 from class XIV, vote 4 (Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services) following a reapportionment of costs between the two Departments; for transfers of £90,000 from class XIII, vote 1 (see above) in respect of a child health care initiative and £14,000 from class IV, vote 2 (Department of Trade and Industry, support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration) in respect of research undertaken by the laboratory of the Government chemist and the national physical laboratory. The increases are partially offset by a transfer of £1,114,000 to class XI, vote 2 (Department of Education and Science, higher and further education) in respect of social work training. The Department's running cost limit is decreased by £733,000 from £253,625,000 to £252,892,000.

The increases have been charged to the reserve and therefore do not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Cigarette Consumption

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide the source of his information that cigarette consumption in the Netherlands declined by 41 per cent. over the period 1975 to 1987; and whether this figure is for both manufactured cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco together, or for only one of these categories.

Mr. Dorrell: The original source of this information is the Central Bureau for Statistics, the Netherlands. The figure relates only to manufactured cigarettes. It was recently published in the United Kingdom in Waterson M. J. "Advertising and Tobacco Consumption: An Analysis of the two Major Aspects of the Debate" *International Journal of Advertising*, 1990, *9*, 59-72, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if priority will be given to the removal of tobacco advertising, not only from shops visible from schools and playgrounds, but also from shops close to schools and playgrounds.

Mr. Dorrell: The new voluntary agreement between the tobacco industry and the Government on tobacco advertising will require the industry to remove 50 per cent. of all permanent shopfront advertising over five years. The terms of the agreement will mean that the industry must give priority to removing signs clearly visible from schools. It is these signs which cause greatest concern to the Government.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the agreement with the tobacco industry announced recently to limit external permanent advertising on shops will apply to advertising stuck to the interior of shop windows facing outwards.

Mr. Dorrell: The agreement will cover permanent advertising material of this type, specifically window friezes and full window dressings.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the types of external permanent advertising material on shops to which his agreement with the tobacco industry will not apply.

Mr. Dorrell: No specific categories of external permanent advertising material on shops are excluded from the agreement.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what method will be used to measure the 50 per cent. reduction in permanent external tobacco advertising material on shop fronts.

Mr. Dorrell: Once the agreement has been concluded, the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship will engage independent consultants to monitor compliance with this aspect of the agreement. The methodology used by the consultants will be agreed between them and the committee. This matter will be covered in the committee's annual reports.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will commission an independent survey of the extent of tobacco advertising material on shops, comparable with those conducted for the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship by MAS Research Marketing and Consultancy Ltd. and reported in its first and second reports.

Mr. Dorrell: The precise nature of the independent consultancy work to be undertaken in monitoring compliance with the agreement is a matter for the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he consulted the medical profession before concluding his agreement with the tobacco industry on advertising.

Mr. Dorrell: We have not yet finally concluded the agreement. We are fully aware of the medical profession's views on this matter. The Department's own medical advisers took an active part in the negotiations.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that there is no increase in shop-front tobacco advertising in the period before the new voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry comes into effect.

Mr. Dorrell: The reference date for the number of permanent shopfront signs advertising tobacco will be 1 July 1991. The industry has given firm assurances that it is not its intention to use the period before 1 July to make significant increases in the number of such signs.

"Registration: proposals for change"

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received following the publication of the White Paper on "Registration: proposals for change", (Cm. 939).

Mr. Dorrell: There has been generally a widespread welcome for the proposals made in the White Paper.

Secular Marriages

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further consideration he has given to the form of service, person performing the service, authorised buildings and greater flexibility in the arrangements for secular marriages; if he will now consider introducing legislation to enable secular marriages to be carried out by magistrates, mayors or provosts, to allow them to take place in civic and other specified buildings, and to allow greater flexibility in the services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The proposals in Cm. 939 are designed to give greater flexibility in the form of civil marriage ceremony and the choice of venues where such ceremonies may be conducted. The Government intend to introduce legislation to give effect to those and other proposals in the White Paper as soon as other parliamentary business allows.

The Government have no plans to allow civil marriages and the attendant responsibilities to be carried out by anyone other than registration officers.

South Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received during the past six months from residents in South Yorkshire expressing support for the transfer of the South Yorkshire ambulance service to trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 20 May 1991 c. 394]:* I regret that the identification of Yorkshire regional health authority as being responsible for the public consultation exercise on the trust application from the South Yorkshire ambulance service was incorrect. Trent regional health authority is conducting this exercise.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Correspondence

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what caused the delay in replying to the letter of 25 September 1990 to the Minister of State responsible for prisons from the Member for Brent, East about his constituent, Ms. R. Louis; and for what reasons could a copy of the reply not be faxed to him on 23 May.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is regretted that the hon. Member's first letter of 25 September 1990 was lost at prison service headquarters during reorganisation and the reply not provided until the receipt of his further letter of 4 April. A copy of the reply was faxed to the House of Commons for the attention of the hon. Member on 23 May.

Indecency

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury of 20 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *334*, he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on any changes made since that date to force instructions contained in the Metropolitan police force instruction manual or elsewhere relating to police operations to detect possible offences of indecency; and whether clearer guidance has been provided.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Metropolitan police that no such changes have been made since 20 December 1990, although this is being kept under review. The Metropolitan police instruction manual includes directions to officers as to the procedures to be followed in a wide range of street duties. It contains no specific instructions relating to the detection of offences of indecency. This is because the action to be taken by officers must be determined primarily by the circumstances of each particular case, within the overall guidelines.

Visas

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions are taking place with the European Community concerning the validity of visas issued by one member state throughout the Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The question of co-operation between member states on visa matters is currently under discussion in the EC intergovernmental fora which are examining a draft convention on the crossing of external frontiers. It is too early to predict the outcome of those discussions.

Cash Limits

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to make any changes to the 1991-92 cash limits within his responsibilities and to his Department's running costs limits.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class IX, vote 3, will be increased by £12,872,000, from £878,445,000 to £891,317,000. At the same time the Home

Office running costs limit will be increased by £9,007,000 from £1,294,993,000 to £1,304,000,000. This mainly reflects the additional provision sought in connection with an increase in the number of asylum applications.

£9,000 of the increase will be offset by a transfer of provision from the Cabinet Office (class XIX, vote 1). The balance of £12,863,000 will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

WALES

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit *(a)* Sandycroft C. P. school and *(b)* Connah's Quay Bryn C. P. school, to discuss standard assessment tasks with staff members.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Although we have no immediate plan to visit these schools, my right hon. Friend and I have discussed assessment tasks with teachers in several schools we have recently visited. The Welsh Office in conjunction with HMI and the School Examinations and Assessment Council will be holding a one day conference at the end of June for primary teachers and advisers from all LEAs in Wales to discuss this year's assessment arrangements for seven-year-olds.

Residential Homes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy initiatives he plans concerning homes in Wales for the elderly mentally infirm.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We recognise the vulnerability of elderly people with mental infirmities and the need for adequate networks of care for them and of support for their families and friends who provide care.

Where it is no longer possible for an individual to stay in his or her own home, admission to residential, nursing home or hospital care should be a positive choice based on a full assessment of realistic alternatives. Such care should be in appropriately designed and staffed, locally based accommodation.

Our detailed policies and programme of action are set out in the Welsh Chapter of the White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond" (Cm 849), in the guidance on social care plans published by the Welsh Office in September 1990 and in the all-Wales mental illness strategy published in May 1989. Copies of these documents are in the Library of the House.

These are being carried into effect through complementary county plans for mental illness services and social care more generally which are to be published by April 1992. Earmarked Welsh Office funds under the mental illness strategy, the elderly initiative and the new grant scheme to promote more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and those with physical or sensory disabilities are helping to develop the required patterns of local services.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from the Care Homes Association concerning the fees paid to care homes and to nursing homes.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None this year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he will take to enable local authorities to top up payments to homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Local authorities have the power to top up payments to independent sector residential homes in respect of people receiving the residential rate of income support who are under 65 or who continue in such care from the age of 65. From 1 April 1993, the Government intend that these arrangements will remain in place for those who continue in residential or nursing home care which they entered before that date.

For new residents of all ages from 1 April 1993 there will be new arrangements. Local authorities will manage a single unified budget to cover the costs of social care, whether in a person's own home or in a residential care or nursing home. People who enter homes under this new funding system and who need public financial support will no longer, therefore, have their care costs met by social security. The present rules on local authority topping up payments will, therefore, no longer apply to this group. In place of the present special income support limits, they will be able to claim help from the normal income support system of personal allowances and premiums, and from housing benefit. The financial incentives towards residential care under present income support rules will therefore be eliminated.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many residential homes for the elderly mentally infirm there are in each county in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of homes for elderly people as at 31 March 1990 is shown in the following table. Homes catering for elderly mentally infirm residents are included in these figures.

	Local authority homes	*Private homes*	*Voluntary homes*
Clwyd	20	151	5
Dyfed	29	68	2
Gwent	24	22	—
Gwynedd	27	84	2
Mid Glamorgan	34	32	2
Powys	14	17	1
South Glamorgan	21	79	9
West Glamorgan	21	26	3
Wales	190	479	24

Visits to Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schools he has visited in 1991.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend visited Ysgol David Hughes, Gwynedd on 20 May 1991 and Ruthin school, Clwyd on 24 May 1991. During the course of 1991 I have visited four county primary schools and seven county secondary schools in Wales. These are as follows:

School		Date
Lansdowne County Primary School	South Glamorgan	18 January 1991
Llanishen High School	South Glamorgan	18 January 1991
Ysgol Pencae (County Primary)	Gwynedd	4 February 1991
Ysgol Aberconwy (Secondary)	Gwynedd	4 February 1991
Ysgol Llwyn Crwn	Mid Glamorgan	22 March 1991
Ysgol Rhydyfelen	Mid Glamorgan	22 March 1991
Ysgol Glantaf	South Glamorgan	26 April 1991
Ysgol John Bright	Gwynedd	2 May 1991
Tywyn Primary School	West Glamorgan	10 May 1991
Olchfa Comprehensive School	West Glamorgan	10 May 1991

Primary School Tests

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet teachers' unions to discuss the impact of standard assessment testing on staffing levels in primary schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I recently met the representatives of the Welsh Secondary Schools Association and will shortly meet with representatives of the National Association of Head Teachers in Wales to discuss assessment issues.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to the 1991-92 cash limits for class XVI, votes 4, 5, 8 and 10.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary and revised estimates, the cash limit on class XVI, vote 4 will be increased by £8,408,000, from £143,000,000 to £151,408,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 5 will be increased by £724,000, from £399,151,000 to £399,875,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 8 will be increased by £10,291,000, from £1,120,386,000 to £1,130,677,000; and the cash limit on class XVI, vote 10 will be reduced by £62,716,000, from £1,827,515,000 to £1,764,799,000.

The increase to vote 4 provides additional resources for training and enterprise councils in respect of employment training.

The increase to vote 5 comprises: (i) the provision of resources for grant-maintained schools (£500,000) which are offset by a corresponding reduction in class XVI, vote 10; (ii) additional provision in respect of various payments to be made to the Department of Education and Science (£1,108,000) which will be offset by a corresponding reduction in class XI, votes 1 and 2; and (iii) a reduction in the provision for rating work by valuation offices, following an amended VAT ruling by Customs and Excise (£884,000). This reduction will be used to offset in part an increase in class XVI, vote 11 in respect of flood, storm and emergency services.

The increase to vote 8 comprises: (i) additional resources towards meeting the cost of the pay awards recommended in the 1991 report of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration (£10,100,000); and (ii) provision for the funding of occupational therapy training (£191,000).

The reduction to vote 10 is made up as follows. (i) There is a decrease of £62,000,000 in respect of the community charge reduction scheme, provision for which is being sought by means of a summer supplementary estimate on class XVI, vote 11. (ii) There is a decrease in the provision for rate support grant (£216,000) following the recalculation of local authorities' entitlements. The latter reduction will offset that element of the increase in class XVI, vote 11 in respect of flood, storm and emergency services (£1,100,000) not covered by the reduction from class XVI, vote 5. (iii) There is a decrease in the provision for revenue support grant (£500,000) to offset an increase in class XVI, vote 5 in respect of expenditure on grant-maintained schools.

As already announced, the increase in respect of review bodies' pay awards and the provision for employment training have been charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. There is no net impact on public expenditure of the other changes shown above.

Children's Homes

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will make a statement about the management of children's homes in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have already announced our intention to review local authorities' arrangements for the management and control of their children's homes: I intend to invite voluntary and private children's homes to co-operate in this exercise. The review will be conducted by the social services inspectorate Wales, and the report of its findings will be published.

Separately, following the recent allegations in the press, I have decided to direct Gwent county council to set up a full independent inquiry into the management regime and practical day-to-day running of Ty Mawr community home, and into the county council's arrangements for oversight and control of the local management. Guidance to local authorities on the need for them to take early action to introduce complaints procedures for the children in their care has already been issued. In collaboration with the Department of Health, the Department will be issuing further comprehensive guidance on residential care as part of the process of implementing the Children Act 1989 which comes into force in October. We will take whatever further action is necessary in the light of the reports of the Ty Mawr inquiry and our own review of children's homes when these are to hand.

In addition, officials have recently completed a thorough review of secure care for young people. The review, which took evidence from all interested parties, paid particular attention to the need for secure accommodation to avoid the use of prison for boys on remand. I am presently considering the final report of the review which we will be publishing for consultation next month. The consultation, which will be very wide, will be conducted with all urgency consonant with a proper consideration of the issues.

ENVIRONMENT

Uniform Business Rate (Post Offices)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received concerning the effect of the uniform business rate on rural post offices; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to provide relief from the uniform business rate for community post offices.

Mr. Key: We have received a number of representations on this subject, and a Post Office survey has shown a varied effect on rates bills for this type of property. Some sub-postmasters have stated that they are better off under the new arrangements.

We do not propose to give rate relief to "community" post offices. Such property is rateable only to the extent that the non-domestic use prevents part of it from being used wholly for the purposes of living accommodation at some time during the day. In view of concerns expressed about the rating of "community" post offices, valuation officers have checked the assessment of these properties.

From 1 April this year, we have also improved the transitional arrangements for properties in mixed domestic and commercial use to limit year-on-year rates increases to 10 per cent. in real terms; this will benefit many rural post offices.

Royal Parks Police

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many police were employed by the royal parks in *(a)* 1971, *(b)* 1981 and *(c)* 1991, respectively.

Sir George Young: The royal parks constabulary was formed in 1974. Prior to that there was a body of park keepers with a strength of 174 in 1971. The authorised complement of the RPC was 159 in 1981 and 160 in 1991.

Ordnance Survey (Expenditure)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount spent by the Ordnance Survey in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the Ordnance Survey in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Baldry: The chief executive will write to the hon. Member.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the basis upon which service personnel and their families living in a group of properties, not having separate rateable values entered in the valuation list, will now be able to benefit under the Community Charge (England) (Reductions) Regulations 1991; and what steps he has taken to inform local authorities of this change.

Mr. Key: The aim of the reduction scheme is to limit the increase in community charges over rates in 1989. The improvements to the scheme announced on 25 March will help people who live in properties where there was only one rateable value covering several residences. Under transitional relief a maximum of two personal community charges only could be compared to the rates. Under the community charge reduction scheme local authorities are now required to compare the rates with the aggregate community charge liability of all the eligible charge payers living in one or more properties covered by one rateable value. This change will particularly benefit service personnel living in properties which did not have separate rateable values. Details of the changes to the scheme were sent to authorities on 26 March and 28 March.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals to the West Yorkshire valuation and community charge tribunals were waiting to be heard on 22 May; how many appeals have been resolved since 1 April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The available information is as follows:

	Outstanding Appeals	*Appeals Cleared since 1 April 1990*
(a) 1973 Rating Appeals as at 22 May 1991	339	6,163
(b) 1990 Rating Appeals at end of April 1991	23,610	324
(c) 1990 Transitional and Completion Notice Appeals as at 22 May 1991	2,086	146
(d) Community Charge Appeals at end of April 1991	59	181

Most of the 1990 rating appeals were not transferred from valuation offices to the tribunal until February and March this year. Some of these have already been listed for hearing; the 324 cases cleared are those agreed or withdrawn since 1 December 1990.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent action he has taken to remind local authorities of their duties *(a)* to collect all the community charges owed to them and *(b)* actively to pursue non-payers and late payers of the community charge; and if he will introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from passing on the shortfall per head in revenue, caused by those charge payers who do not pay in full, to charge payers who do pay in full.

Mr. Key: All authorities are very well aware of their duty to collect the community charge from all those liable to pay it. In commenting on the latest community charge collection figures published on 29 May my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Local Government and Inner Cities made it clear that authorities were still under an obligation to collect any outstanding charges and that there would be no amnesty for non-payers. It is right than when setting community charges authorities should take account of their estimates of any amounts which will be unrecoverable, as they did when setting rate poundages under the former rating system.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the departmental guidelines issued since February 1991 to local authorities on the poll tax, their date of issue and a brief summary of each of their contents.

Mr. Key: My Department has written to local authorities about the community charge on the following occasions since February:

11 March
"Community Charge and Non-Domestic Rating: Statutory Instruments and Circular Letters"
—This contained a list of all statutory instruments laid in 1990 and 1991 and all circular letters issued by the Department since October 1990.

19 March
"Community Charges in 1991-92"
—This outlined the changes made to the community charge as announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech.

26 March
"Community Charges in 1991-92"
—This gave further details of the General Reduction of £140 and of changes to be made to the Community Charge Reduction Scheme.

28 March
"Community Charges in 1991-92"
—This gave further guidance on the effect of the General Reduction in charges and explained in more depth the changes to the Community Charge Reduction Scheme.

25 April
"The Personal Community Charge (Reduction) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1991"
—This explained the effect of the regulations amending the criteria by which chargepayers are eligible under the Reduction Scheme.

7 May
"The Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rating (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1991"
—This explained the effect of these regulations on the instalment arrangements for the payment of community charges.

16 May
"Community Charge Liability: British Service Personnel in the Gulf"
—This gave charging authorities guidance about the liability of British service personnel posted to the Gulf in the light of the High Court decision on Bradford City Council *v.* Anderton, and also gave details about the reimbursement scheme to be operated by the Ministry of Defence.

20 May
"You and the Community Charge: Reductions for 1991-92"
—This enclosed copies of the new leaflet explaining how the £140 reduction and the Community Charge Reduction Scheme will work in 1991-92.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information local authorities are required to provide to community charge payers, on the community charge bill, relating to the item called other adjustments.

Mr. Key: Authorities are required to provide their charge payers with explanatory notes which form part of their community charge bill. These include a note on other adjustments which explains that the main adjustments taken account of in this figure are authorities' estimates of interest payable to or by the authority; changes in income due to movements on and off the community charges register; income from standard charges; and community charges not collected by the authority.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many individuals have been prosecuted for non-payment of the community charge; and what percentage of charge payers are estimated not to have paid their community charge in full.

Mr. Key: By the end of March 1991 local authorities in England had issued 4·1 million summonses for non-payment of the community charge and had obtained almost 3 million liability orders. Information is not available on the numbers of charge payers who have paid their charge in full; but we estimate that by the end of March 1991, 91 per cent. of charge payers had made some payment.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the factors which he takes into account in calculating the standard spending assessments and the total external support for Basildon district council and Southend-on-Sea borough council; and the weighting that was given to each factor.

Mr. Key: The factors and weights used to calculate standard spending assessments (SSAs) which form the basis of grant distribution, are the same for all authorities providing the same range of services. They are set out in the "Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England)" as amended by the "Revenue Support Grant Distribution (Amendment) Report (England)" approved by the House of Commons on 29 January. Copies of both of these are in the Library together with the SSA handbook for 1991-92 which provides details of the service elements of SSA for every authority.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations regarding the lay-out of the community charge bill issued by local authorities and the information it provides.

Mr. Key: My Department received a number of responses from authorities and other organisations on the form of the community charge bill and its accompanying information following the issue of draft regulations on these matters last year.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to local authorities about backdating claims for rebate on the poll tax.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the "Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Guidance Manual", especially paragraph B2.34, which was issued to local authorities in January this year. A copy of the guidance manual is in the Library. In addition, local authorities were informed in March this year about the special arrangements for claims for benefit affected by the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991.

Housing Statistics

83. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a table showing nationally, regionally and for each district, the total number of dwellings, the total number of owner-occupied dwellings, the number rented from (i) public and (ii) private landlords and the average rent charged for commercial dwellings in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Key: National and regional estimates of the stock of dwellings by type of tenure appear in "Housing and

Construction Statistics, Great Britain, 1979-1989". The national estimates for December 1979 and subsequent years are in table 9.3. The earliest consistent figures at regional level, showing housing association dwellings separately from private rented dwellings, are for April 1981 and these are in table 9.4. An unpublished table for December 1989 with these categories combined has been placed in the Library. The latest available estimates, for December 1990, appear in tables 2.23 and 2.25 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Great Britain, December quarter 1990, Part 2".

Estimates for individual authorities which are consistent with national and regional totals and tenure categories are not available. A table giving total stock for each local authority at the end of 1980 and 1990 has been placed in the Library.

National and sub-national information on private sector fair rents registered with rent officers for 1979 are published in the Department's "Note for Rent Officers RO(S)33", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Comparable information for the fourth quarter of 1990 is in the Department's "Statistical Bulletin 91(2) Rent Officer Statistics, Third and fourth quarters 1990".

Residential Property Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment what is his estimate of the number and average value of residential properties in each English region and in Wales, together with his estimate of the value of the housing stock in each case.

Mr. Key: The table provides the information requested.

Region	*Number of domestic hereditaments (millions)*	*Average value per hereditament (£)*	*Implied value of housing stock (£bn)*
Northern	1·2	50,000	60
North West	2·5	58,000	150
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·0	60,000	120
East Midlands	1·6	66,000	100
West Midlands	2·0	63,000	130
East Anglia	0·8	67,000	50
South West	1·8	82,000	150
South East	4·1	96,000	400
Greater London	2·8	117,000	330

Royal Parks (Contracts)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether all the work allocated by the district works office, royal parks, to Baker Bros. that was paid for, has now been completed.

Sir George Young: With one exception, the type of orders used by the district works office, royal parks, to place work with that company (which is now called Electrical Refrigeration (South East Ltd) requires the work to be completed before payment is made. The exception related to a specific contract which provided for interim payments; the work was completed before the final payment was made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which district works offices of the Property Services Agency allocated electrical work to Messrs Baker Bros (Grays) Ltd. in the year since 1987.

Sir George Young: The district works offices concerned were central London palaces, City-London north, Kensington, museums and galleries groups 1 and 2, royal parks, special buildings 1 and 2, Whitehall, north and Whitehall, south.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he has taken to assure himself that electrical and buildings maintenance work carried out to the Rose Garden restaurant in Regent's park has been accurately apportioned and monitored;

(2) what steps he has taken to assure himself that the arrangements for allocating work to Messrs. Baker Bros. (Grays) Ltd. on projects carried out at Regent's park were drawn up in compliance with departmental guidelines;

(3) why it was decided not to use measured term contractors in the case of contracts allocated by the district works office, royal parks, for work carried out in Regent's park in the years 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Sir George Young: PSA Services, Building Management, London (BML) is employed to undertake maintenance work at the Rose Garden restaurant. For that type of work detailed procedures exist relating to the selection of the appropriate method by which individual services are to be executed, the supervision of that work and the scrutiny of invoices prior to payment authorisation. The district works officer and regional management are required to carry out regular personal checks of randomly selected orders; and the district works office is the subject of other management reviews, the results of which are passed to BML's management board.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contracts were given by the district works office, royal parks, to Baker Bros. (Grays) Ltd. of Essex in each year since 1988.

Sir George Young: The number of contracts placed with that company in those years was five.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to assure himself that the allocation of contracts by the district works office, royal parks, to Baker Bros. (Grays) Ltd. of Essex in 1988, 1989 and 1990 complied with all departmental guidelines.

Sir George Young: Three of the contracts were awarded to the company as a result of competitive tendering in accordance with departmental guidelines and in which the company made the most favourable offer. The other two

were for very small value works, which the district works officer placed with the company in accordance with his delegated authority.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether contract work to the open air theatre at Regent's park, allocated by the district works office, royal parks, was completed within budget.

Sir George Young: Since the formation of the district works office, royal parks, works services on this site have comprised minor maintenance and minor new works. Some cost overruns have occurred. By its very nature, work in existing property is likely to encounter unforeseeable problems which may result in additional expenditure. However, if the cost of such services exceeds the estimate, procedures require the matter to be referred to management for approval of the additional cost. Since 1 April 1990, the funding of works services in the royal parks has been the responsibility of DOE central's royal parks division, which approves each individual service and any significant variation.

Heveningham Hall

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what agreement as to the implementation of the tree planting scheme of Dame Sylvia Crowe at Heveningham hall was agreed by the purchaser at the time of the sale in 1981; and what steps the owner has taken to fulfil it.

Sir George Young: The purchaser covenanted to use his best endeavours to commence, carry out and complete the tree planting scheme recommended by Dame Sylvia Crowe in her report of November 1975, or an alternative scheme if agreed in writing by the vendor. The implementation of the scheme has been delayed, partly by the loss of a large number of trees in the storms of the past four years. Suffolk county council is currently formulating a new planting programme with the managing agents, Suffolk Coastal district council and Task Force Trees to reinstate these losses. Dame Sylvia Crowe's scheme is also being re-examined in the light of more recent research.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he took to verify the suitability of I. D. Investment Development AG to be the purchaser of Heveningham hall at the time of its sale in 1981.

Sir George Young: The negotiations for the sale of the hall were conducted with the late Mr. Al Ghazzi and his solicitors. It would not be appropriate to give details of the inquiries which were made at the time as to Mr. Al Ghazzi's suitability. The terms of sale include the acceptance of certain covenants by I. D. Investment Development AG and a deed of covenant by Mr. Al Ghazzi guaranteeing the company's performance.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to return the James Wyatt furniture to Heveningham hall.

Sir George Young: This is a matter which will need to be considered when the restoration work is completed.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to identify the ultimate beneficial owner of I. D. Investment Development AG as the legal owner of Heveningham hall and at the time of its purchase of the hall.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend's concern is to ensure that this outstanding historic building is properly restored and maintained. He does not need further information about the ownership of the hall in order to monitor the progress of the work, which is going well.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what restrictive covenants there are to cover the use by the Al Ghazzi family of Heveningham hall.

Sir George Young: There are no restrictive covenants on the use of Heveningham hall.

Radon

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the exceptionally high radon levels found in tap water in Alnwick, Northumberland.

Mr. Trippier: A survey of tap water, organised by researchers at Bristol, is currently being conducted at secondary schools round the country. The survey involves the use of a simple kit to test for radon. A single sample from a school in Alnwick was found to contain radon activity of 65 bq/l. I am advised by the National Radiological Protection Board that this result is not a cause for concern.

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the outcome of the recent publicity campaign in Cornwall and Devon relating to radon in homes.

Mr. Baldry: I launched a publicity campaign on 11 March to encourage householders in Cornwall and Devon to take advantage of the Government-funded free radon measurement service, which is available on request to householders throughout the two counties. My Department has produced a leaflet, "Radon in Houses", which has been distributed to all households in Cornwall and Devon.

Seven hundred and fifty thousand copies of the leaflet have been sent out. The house-to-house leaflet drop was backed up by a widespread poster campaign. Posters have been displayed in libraries, citizens advice bureaux, DIY shops, estate agents etc, and additional leaflets were made available through these outlets. 160 copies of a Braille version of the leaflet were sent out through the blind welfare officers of the two counties. A public service announcement was recorded for use by local radio stations.

I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the campaign has been a resounding success. The leaflet has a tear-off slip to enable householders to apply to the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) for a radon measurement. NRPB carries out radon measurements for Government. Up to the present, over 72,000 requests have been received from householders by the board. All those applying will receive a response within four weeks, and the radon detectors themselves within two months. Over 50,000 measurements are already in progress.

Cornwall and Devon make up the only area of the country which has formally been designated by the NRPB as a radon affected area. About 12 per cent. of homes in the region may have radon concentrations exceeding the level at which householders are advised to take action to

reduce it; this is a much larger proportion than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Long-term exposure to radon increases the risk of contracting lung cancer.

If the results show that the Government action level is exceeded, householders are advised to undertake the necessary remedial measures, which can usually be carried out effectively for relatively modest cost. Advice on remedies is given in the Department's free leaflet, "The Householders' Guide to Radon", a copy of which is always provided with the radon survey results. Local authorities may give discretionary house renovation grants for radon remedial works, subject to a test of resources.

I most sincerely urge all householders in Cornwall and Devon to accept the advice to have their houses measured for radon.

Footpaths and Bridleways

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by year for the past 10 years, and for the current year to date, the number of *(a)* public footpaths and *(b)* public bridleways that have been (i) created and (ii) closed to the general public.

Mr. Baldry: Information is not held centrally in precisely the form requested, but records held by the Countryside Commission indicate that the number of public path creation and extinguishment orders made, and known to have to come into operation in England and Wales since the introduction of revised procedures on 28 February were:

	Orders made	*Orders known to have come into operation*
Creation		
1983[1]	65	43
1984	60	47
1985	79	65
1986	93	79
1987	71	55
1988	108	87
1989	97	74
1990	113	76
1991[2]	45	19
Extinguishment[3]		
1983[1]	215	143
1984	281	187
1985	309	196
1986	267	186
1987	295	157
1988	289	177
1989	242	143
1990	303	151
1991[2]	100	23

[1] After 28 February.

[2] Approximately first half of year.

[3] These figures include orders for diversion or temporary extinguishment; orders made by magistrates' courts; and side road orders, which *may* include creation and extinguishment within the same order.

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne can expect a reply to his communication of 26 February on behalf of Mrs. Meryl Hellevoort, of 3 Primrose gardens, Mary's Well, Redruth, on rate support grant payments.

Mr. Key: I have replied to my hon. Friend today.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 21 May, column *405*, with regard to the number of jobs created or attracted in urban development corporations, how the figure for Sheffield was calculated; and where the jobs are located.

Mr. Portillo: The figure of 7,787 jobs for Sheffield development corporation is a gross estimate of permanent jobs created or attracted in the UDA, not a net figure as indicated in the answer given in the *Official Report*, 21 May at column *405*. The figure is an estimate of jobs in the development corporation's area arising out of private sector developments completed since the corporation was established and an estimate of jobs created as a result of grant support to local firms for business development schemes. The majority of jobs, about 7,000, are at Meadowhall.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received to consultation on the separation of local authorities' waste regulation and disposal functions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: On 31 May my Department and the Welsh Office issued a circular giving guidance to those local authorities which are both waste regulation and waste disposal authorities under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 on how to separate those functions as the Act requires.

Some 30 replies were received on the draft circular, issued on 6 March, from local authority associations, individual local authorities and other interested bodies including the waste disposal industry. Responses generally supported the principle of separation, but raised a number of particular concerns.

The local authority associations expressed considerable concern over the extent of separation requested and its possible cost. We have no wish rigidly to prescribe particular administrative structures. We have therefore rewritten the circular to offer authorities more flexibility, provided that they meet the important objective of independence for the regulation authority from pressures arising from their role as disposal authorities. No long-term increase in costs should therefore be involved.

Concerns were also expressed about the future status of waste regulation and I am happy to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Government's policy that the status of waste regulation should be enhanced generally, and that this should be helped not hindered by its separation from waste disposal.

We have set a timetable, taking account of local authority concerns, for them to submit their proposals to the Secretary of State; this should be done as soon as possible and at the latest by 31 December 1991.

We have also now commenced a number of provisions of part II of the Act dealing with the establishment of waste regulation, disposal and collection authorities and some of their functions—in particular, the duty of waste regulation authorities to prepare strategic waste disposal plans for their areas.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue the expected circular on new arrangements for waste disposal operations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, with particular reference to the introduction of competitive tendering for waste disposal contracts and the formation of local authority waste disposal companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My Department and the Welsh Office issued the circular to local authorities on 29 May. The circular provides guidance on new arrangements for waste disposal operations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, including the introduction of competitive tendering for waste disposal contracts, and advice on the formation of local authority waste disposal companies (LAWDCs). The new arrangements will provide the basis for fair competition and higher environmental standards in waste disposal and will, together with other parts of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, encourage the provision of improved services for the collection, keeping, treatment and disposal of waste.

There has been consultation with the local authority associations, with the waste disposal industry and with other interested parties. The advice and guidance contained in the circular reflects the concerns which have been expressed to us.

The circular explains that, under the Act, authorities will no longer be able to carry out waste disposal operations themselves. In the first instance, it will be for authorities to choose what sort of arrangements they wish to make in order to satisfy the provisions of the Act; available options include entering into a joint venture with the private sector, privatising the waste disposal undertaking or establishing a LAWDC under direction from the Secretary of State. Any authorities which do not take steps to make satisfactory new arrangements for waste disposal will be directed to form a LAWDC.

Guidance on the formation of a LAWDC is contained in the circular, as is advice on provisions to be included in a scheme to transfer the authority's waste disposal undertaking to a LAWDC. Each transfer scheme must be approved by the Secretary of State. When authorities are directed to form LAWDCs, each authority will be provided with its own individual timetable for the creation of its LAWDC, reflecting that authority's particular circumstances and the Secretary of State's commitment to implementing this policy as soon as possible. Setting the new arrangements for waste disposal in place throughout England and Wales will be achieved through a co-operative effort, drawing on the resources of both central and local government.

The circular also explains that the Act introduces competitive tendering for waste disposal contracts. With effect from 31 May, local authorities must award only new contracts for waste disposal through competitive tender. In framing the terms of any contract, authorities must consider whether to include conditions designed to maximise recycling and to minimise pollution of the environment or harm to human health. Authorities are not required to accept the lowest tender where an alternative offers environmental benefits. At all stages in the process, authorities must take care not to discriminate unduly against particular types of waste disposal contractor. The competitive tendering process will identify the full costs of waste disposal, and will encourage an efficient and environmentally conscious waste disposal service.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limit on the Property Services Agency services vote in 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: Subject to approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class VIII vote 13 will be reduced by £470,000 from £91,416,000 to £90,946,000. The reduction is due to the transfer of £500,000 to Property Holdings (in respect of the transfer of the PSA security group function) offset by an inward transfer of £30,000 from the Department of Trade and Industry following the extension of charging for seedcorn research.

This vote also covers the residual costs of the Crown Suppliers, following the closure on 31 March of the Crown Suppliers trading fund. Pending parliamentary approval of the estimates, urgent expenditure estimated at £5,000,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's running cost limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: Yes, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary summer supplementary estimate, the running cost limit for Property Holdings will be increased by £7,058,000 from £49,973,000 to £57,031,000. The increase reflects the transfer of responsibility to Property Holdings of the special services group from class VIII vote 13 and the interdepartmental despatch service from the Crown Suppliers.

Sir Timothy Raison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits and running costs limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised and supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

(i) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 2 (miscellaneous housing administration and grants) will be reduced by £25,588,000 from £221,495,000 to £195,907,000. This mainly reflects a decision to transfer £25,500,000 of capital resources for projects for the single homeless to the DOE Housing Corporation (DOE/HC) non-voted cash limit. These transferred resources will continue to be available to provide for the single homeless. The remainder of the cash limit reduction is to the provision for grants to the priority estates project;

(ii) the DOE/HC non-voted cash limit will be increased by £25,500,000 from £1,495,425,000 to £1,520,925,000. This results from the transfer of resources for capital projects to help the single homeless from the cash limited vote class VIII, vote 2 to DOE/HC as described above;

(iii) the cash limit on class VIII, vote 5 (central environmental services, etc.) will be increased by £665,000 from £326,625,000 to £327,290,000. The increase is required mainly to cover higher charges for environmental research, arising from the introduction of full cost recovery by the Department of Trade and Industry (the offsetting increased receipts appear on class IV, vote 2). The increase also provides for an enhanced better environment

awards for industry scheme and for the costs of transporting oil recovery equipment to Bahrain, following the major oil spills during the Gulf conflict;

(iv) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 6 (royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, etc.) will be reduced by £1,110,000 from £174,144,000 to £173,034,000. There will be a reduction in provision for the Royal Commission on historical monuments of England of £2,771,000 due to its relocation plans being rephased offset by minor increases in provision throughout the vote;

(v) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 8 (Department of the Environment: Administration) will be increased by £466,000 from £187,951,000 to £188,417,000. There are various transfers which include a transfer of £675,000 from class VIII, vote 7 (Department of the Environment: Property Holdings) in respect of financial and administrative services to be provided for Property Holdings and a transfer of £200,000 to the Department of Education and Science for sport and recreation work;

(vi) the running costs limit for the Department will be increased by £531,000 from £189,530,000 to £190,061,000.

On behalf of the Director General of the Office of Water Services, I have to announce a cash limit reduction on class VIII, vote 11 (Office of Water Services) of £15,000 from £6,300,000 to £6,285,000. The Department's running cost limit will be reduced by £269,000 from £5,713,000 to £5,444,000. The reduction in running costs will offset increases in capital expenditure on accommodation and information technology. There are also some other minor changes on the vote.

These increases will be charged to the Reserve and not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Peacetime Civil Emergency Plans

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to require local authorities to draw up peacetime civil emergency plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Vacant Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the amount of vacant, dormant, derelict, underused and under-utilised land owned by each Government Department.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his reply, Tuesday 19 February 1991, c115-16]:* Holdings of unused and underused land in England at 31 March 1990, the latest available date, as reported by the Departments concerned, are shown in the table. Information about health authorities' land is not available. No unused or underused land is held by any other major Departments.

Individual Departments are responsible for monitoring and managing their own property holdings. The rationalisation of holdings, the disposal of surplus land and the improvement of systems are encouraged through the public expenditure survey discussions and in other ways.

Unused and underused land held by Departments

	acres
Ministry of Defence	2,527
Department of the Environment	117
Home Office	299
HM Land Registry	18
Lord Chancellor's Department	9
Department of Transport	1,606

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the outcome of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade textiles committee meeting held on 16 May; and if he will make a statement on his policy on renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement for 17 months on existing terms.

Mr. Sainsbury: The textiles committee discussed the basis on which the multi-fibre arrangement should be extended after its expiry on 31 July this year. No decision was reached. A further meeting is expected in mid-June. The European Community, on behalf of the United Kingdom and the other member states, is proposing a 17-month extension on existing terms.

Cash Limit

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit and running cost limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Lilley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class IV, vote 2 (support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection, and administration) will be increased by £4,559,000 from £758,460,000 to £763,019,000. The running costs limit for the Department of Trade and Industry will be increased by £440,000 from £257,796,000 to £258,236,000.

In order to establish the Patent Office and Companies house executive agencies as trading funds, the increase in the cash limit covers net provision of £7,252,000 for loans to Patent Office and £6,037,000 for loans to Companies House to provide initial working capital and finance for long-term projects. This expenditure will require the prior approval of the House to the establishment of the two funds. It is offset by decreases of £4,125,000 in net provision of Companies house and £655,000 for the Patent Office to reflect their transition to trading fund status together with increased appropriations in aid of £3,184,000 on the administration section as a result of receipts from those new trading funds.

There are also increases of £250,000 in the consumer and investor protection programme to provide assistance for the share ownership movement, £120,000 in the space technology programmes in respect of residual espenditure on Dialtech retrieval services, £71,000 for the Department's promotion of consumer safety, to be fully met by receipts from the European Community, and £20,000 in the industrial research programme to meet the United Kingdom's subscription to the European resource centre for economic redevelopment and restructuring.

These increases are partly offset by a net decrease of £268,000 in telecommunications and posts expenditure, comprising increases in subscriptions to international

organisations and regulatory publicity which are more than offset by an increase in related receipts; a decrease of £122,000 in administration in respect of consultancies and formal inquiries; and a decrease of £650,000 in the measurement and technology support programme for strategic research paid to the Warren Spring laboratory, the laboratory of the Government chemist and the national physical laboratory executive agencies, to reflect transfers to other Government Departments which will fund such research directly. These net running cost controlled agencies' gross total and appropriations in aid both accordingly increase by £556,000 for WSL, £84,000 for LGC and £10,000 for NPL. Increased appropriations in aid of £34,000 for the national engineering laboratory executive agency reflect recovery of strategic research costs from other Government Departments by NEL, which is on gross running cost control.

In addition, there are net transfers of provision of £195,000 from NPL to LGC in respect of provision of common services and minor capital purchases, and of £255,000 from the support for industrial research and development programme to civil aircraft research and demonstration in respect of a project under the EUREKA programme.

An increase of £206,000 for additional superannuation liability of suppliers of central services is more than offset by a reduction of £355,000 of superannuation liability in the administration section for export services; the net reduction will be matched by reduced receipts on the superannuation vote.

The departmental running cost limit will be increased by £440,000, reflecting the reclassification to running costs of programme expenditure of £305,000 in respect of companies investigations, transfers of £67,000 from the FCO and Civil Service Commission for recruitment, publicity and the establishment of the export services joint directorate, an increase of £230,000 to facilitate DTI's policy of establishing strict customer/contractor relationships between their central services and customer divisions (fully offset by receipts of central service suppliers) and £120,000 from NPL to the national weights and measures laboratory in respect of the provision of common services. These increases are partly offset by a transfer of £282,000 from running costs to programme expenditure in connection with work on copyright policy by the Patent Office trading fund.

This supplementary estimate increases the DTI's public expenditure provision by a net £623,000 when the non-voted public expenditure consequences of creating Patent Office and Companies house trading funds are taken into account. This increase will be charged to the reserve and therefore will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Tertiary Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all tertiary colleges in England by local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Those colleges in England generally known as tertiary colleges are as follows:

College	*Authority*
Elm Park College	Harrow
Greenhill College	Harrow
Weald College	Harrow
Richmond upon Thames College	Richmond upon Thames
Bury Metropolitan College	Bury
Manchester College of Arts and Technology	Manchester
South Manchester College	Manchester
Leigh College	Wigan
Wigan College of Technology	Wigan
Knowsley Tertiary College	Knowsley
Castle College	Sheffield
Loxley College	Sheffield
Norton College	Sheffield
Parkwood College	Sheffield
Parson Cross College	Sheffield
Stradbroke College	Sheffield
South Tyneside College	South Tyneside
Halesowen College	Dudley
Bilston Community College	Wolverhampton
Dewsbury College	Kirklees
Wakefield District College	Wakefield
South Bristol College	Avon
Isle College, Wisbech	Cambridgeshire
South Cheshire College of Further Education	Cheshire
Penwith Tertiary College	Cornwall
Derby Tertiary College (Mackworth)	Derbyshire
Derby Tertiary College (Wilmorton)	Derbyshire
South East Derbyshire Tertiary College	Derbyshire
Exeter College	Devon
North Devon College	Devon
Weymouth College	Dorset
Derwentside College	County Durham
Peterlee College	County Durham
Lewes Tertiary College	East Sussex
Harlow College	Essex
Royal Forest of Dean College	Gloucestershire
Alton College	Hampshire
Brockenhurst College	Hampshire
Cricklade College, Andover	Hampshire
Fareham Tertiary College	Hampshire
Accrington and Rossendale College	Lancashire
Blackburn College	Lancashire
Nelson and Colne College	Lancashire
Preston College	Lancashire
Runshaw Tertiary College	Lancashire
Skelmersdale College	Lancashire
Daventry Tertiary College	Northamptonshire
Selby College	North Yorkshire
Central Nottingham Tertiary College	Nottinghamshire
Henley College	Oxfordshire
Oswestry College	Shropshire
Bridgwater College	Somerset
Strode College	Somerset
Yeovil College	Somerset
Newcastle under Lyme College	Staffordshire

Sixth Form Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all sixth form colleges in England by local education authority.

Mr. Fallon: Maintained sixth-form colleges in England as at October 1990, within each local education authority, are as follows:

Local education authority and college name

1. Kensington and Chelsea
   St. Charles RC Sixth Form College
2. Wandsworth
   St. Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
3. Barnet
   Woodhouse Sixth Form College

4. Croydon
Purley Sixth Form College
John Ruskin Sixth Form College
5. Harrow
St. Dominic's Sixth Form College
6. Merton
Merton Sixth Form College
7. Waltham Forest
Leyton Sixth Form College
Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College
8. Birmingham
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College
Cadbury Sixth Form College
Josiah Mason Sixth Form College
St. Philip's RC Sixth Form College
9. Dudley
King Edward VI College
10. Sandwell
West Park College
Rowley Regis College
11. Solihull
Solihull Sixth Form College
12. St. Helens
Carmel Sixth Form College
13. Sefton
King George V College
14. Wirral
Birkenhead Sixth Form College
15. Bolton
North Bolton Sixth Form College
South Bolton Sixth Form College
16. Bury
Holy Cross Sixth Form College
17. Manchester
Shena Simon College
Loreto Sixth Form College
Xaverian College
18. Salford
Pendleton College
Eccles College
De La Salle College
19. Stockport
North Area College
The Ridge College
Aquinas RC Sixth Form College
20. Tameside
Hyde Sixth Form College
Ashton-under-Lyne Sixth Form College
21. Wigan
Winstanley College
St. John Rigby RC Sixth Form College
22. Rotherham
Thomas Rotherham College
23. Kirklees
Greenhead College
Huddersfield New College
24. Leeds
Notre Dame Sixth Form College
25. Wakefield
Pontefract New College
26. North Tyneside
Tynemouth College
27. Avon
St. Brendan's RC Sixth Form College
28. Bedfordshire
Luton Sixth Form College
29. Cambridge
Hills Road Sixth Form College
Long Road Sixth Form College
30. Cheshire
Priestley Sixth Form College School
Widnes Sixth Form College
Sir John Deanes College
31. Cleveland
Hartlepool Sixth Form College
South Park Sixth Form College
Marton Sixth Form College
Acklam Sixth Form College
Stockton Sixth Form College
Bede Sixth Form College
Prior Pursglove College
Sir William Turners Sixth Form College
St. Mary's Sixth Form College
32. Cornwall
St. Austell Sixth Form College
33. Cumbria
Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College
34. Durham
Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
35. East Sussex
Varndean Sixth Form College
Brighton Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College
Bexhill College
Eastbourne Sixth Form College
36. Essex
Colchester Sixth Form College
SE Essex Sixth Form
Palmer's Sixth Form College
37. Hampshire
Totton College
Queen Mary's College
Barton Peveril Sixth Form College
Havant College
Farnborough Sixth Form College
Itchen Sixth Form College
St. Vincent Sixth Form College
Portsmouth Sixth Form College
Taunton's College
Peter Symond's Sixth Form College
38. Hereford and Worcester
Hereford Sixth Form College
The Sixth Form College, Worcester
39. Humberside
Wilberforce College
Wyke College
John Leggott College
40. Lancashire
Blackpool Sixth Form College
Newman College
St. Mary's Sixth Form College
41. Leicestershire
Gateway Sixth Form College
Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth College
Wyggeston Collegiate School
Rutland Sixth Form College
42. Norfolk
East Norfolk Sixth Form College
North Walsham-Pashton Sixth Form College
43. North Yorkshire
Scarborough Sixth Form College
York Sixth Form College
44. Nottinghamshire
High Pavement Sixth Form College
Bilborough College
Forest Fields College
45. Shropshire
Shrewsbury Sixth Form College
New College
Ludlow College
46. Somerset
The Richard Huish College
47. Staffordshire
Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College
48. Surrey
Godalming College
Reigate College
Esher College
Woking College
Spelthorne College
Strodes College
Farnham College
49. Warwickshire
King Edward VI College
50. West Sussex
Worthing Sixth Form College
Haywards Heath College
Collyers Sixth Form College

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. Atkins: The Department spent £1,080,368 on management and computer consultancies in the 1990-91 financial year. The contracts concerned were as follows:

Consultant and subject of assignment

AMTEC
Feasibility study for Policy Branch Information System

Butler Cox
Post Implementation Review and Evaluation of the Further Education Statistical Record system

BBT
Data conversion work

BIS
Feasibility study of Enhanced Technical Data Service (ETDS)

BIS
Project review of Enhanced Technical Data Service (ETDS)

BIS
Full study for replacement of Data Collection Processing System

CCTA
Information Systems Strategy Review

CMC, Communicatie-Management Consultants
Contribution to seminar on Restructuring an Inspectorate

CMG
Evaluating network carriers

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
OU review of part-time costs

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
Study of requirements of maintained primary and secondary schools for software for the purposes of collating, managing and transmitting data generated by the statutory NC assessment arrangements

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
Comparison of costs and effects of an HMI Inspection Project with alternative approaches

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
Review of BACS payment system

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
Management of change for IT records management system

Duhig Berry
Project management for survey projects

Elizabeth Braiden Management and Survey Consultant
HMI survey on performance related pay: District Inspector's questionnaire

Ernst and Young
Sport and Recreation Division: Financial Management review of Central Council of Physical Recreation

Henley
Feasibility of Enhanced Technical Data Service (ETDS)

Howard Whitehead and Partners
Management consultancy: survey of ESRC

Hoskyns
Resource planning

ICL
Report and general support to Core Resource Information System-Finance

ICL
Review repair status of mainframe operating systems and recommend

INTAC
Videoconferencing

KINESIS
Options for connecting Architects and Buildings Branch PCs to network

KINESIS
Secretariat review

KINESIS
Facilitator in implementation of IT records management system.

KPMG Management Consulting
Training needs analysis of proposed Teachers' Pensions Agency.

KPMG
Information Systems Branch annual business plan.

KPMG
Review of Teachers' Superannuation Scheme.

LALCREST
Productivity improvement programme.

Neville Russell
Accountancy advice on Assisted Places Scheme and Music and Ballet Scheme with particular reference to the review of assessment of parental contributions and an assessment of applications for fee increases for APS. Advice on financial agreement with 5 MBS schools.

ORACLE
Evaluation of software for Enhanced Technical Data Service (ETDS).

ORACLE
Programming work on HMI travel and subsistence.

ORACLE
Benchmark of hardware for Data Collection Processing System.

Oxford Computer Training
Programming advice.

Peat Marwick and McLintock
Pensions Branch: Pensions Administration System.

PE International
Development of grade 7 training.

PE International
Development of management training.

Management Consulting P-E International
For development of Schools Branch induction programme.

Price Waterhouse
Technical advice on financial controls for National Curriculum Council.

RADIUS
Enhancements and screen production on Accounts payable System.

RML
Advice on technical enhancements to PCs and network.

SSADM (SCOLL)
Productivity improvement programme.

SYBASE
Relational Database Management System Trials.

Thorn EMI
Review of Architects and Buildings Branch.

TRANRATE
Programming work on New Basic Teachers' Record System.
Touche Ross
Local Management of Schools: extension to special schools (feasibility).
Touche Ross
Management consultancy: survey of NERC.
Touche Ross
Advice on extension of Local Management of Schools.
Two B
Amendments to software.
Bob Young
For rewriting school development plans.
The Department had no executive agencies in 1990-91.

Unemployment

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out his plans for funding education provision for the long-term adult unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 23 January 1991 at columns *196-97*; and to the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st century", Cm 1536.

School Buildings

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science further to his reply of 24 April, *Official Report*, columns *438-40*, if he will give in 1990 prices, by local education authority, the level of capital spending on school buildings for 1978-79, 1984-85 and 1988-89.

Mr. Fallon: The following table shows the information requested:

Capital spending by LEAs on school buildings 1990 prices
£ million

LEA	*1978-79*	*1984-85*	*1988-89*
Barking	1·3	3·0	1·5
Barnet	3·3	1·3	3·0
Bexley	3·3	3·1	3·7
Brent	3·3	2·5	0·7
Bromley	1·8	3·4	7·6
Croydon	2·0	1·8	5·7
Ealing	3·0	1·0	1·8
Enfield	4·0	1·0	4·6
Haringey	2·3	1·4	3·8
Harrow	3·3	1·3	3·0
Havering	1·0	1·3	3·9
Hillingdon	5·3	2·0	8·9
Hounslow	5·0	3·5	6·3
Kingston	0·5	0·6	1·9
Merton	1·8	1·3	2·8
Newham	6·3	6·4	3·3
Redbridge	3·3	2·5	4·6
Richmond	1·8	1·7	0·9
Sutton	0·8	1·8	3·6
Waltham Forest	3·8	1·3	7·3
ILEA	32·0	14·7	24·4
Birmingham	7·1	11·7	4·8
Coventry	5·8	2·1	9·4
Dudley	3·8	5·7	4·1
Sandwell	4·5	1·8	0·7
Solihull	3·0	1·6	2·4
Walsall	6·1	3·0	3·2
Wolverhampton	5·0	1·4	2·2
Knowsley	2·0	1·8	1·4
Liverpool	4·8	2·3	11·1
St. Helens	6·3	2·0	1·7
Sefton	3·5	1·7	1·9
Wirral	2·0	3·1	5·4
Bolton	2·5	1·8	2·5
Bury	4·5	0·8	1·1
Manchester	2·8	7·5	9·9
Oldham	2·5	2·1	2·5
Rochdale	5·0	1·7	2·9
Salford	4·8	2·5	3·8
Stockport	2·0	1·3	3·2
Tameside	3·0	2·5	2·8
Trafford	1·0	0·8	1·6
Wigan	6·1	2·5	4·2
Barnsley	5·0	0·1	1·9
Doncaster	3·8	1·0	0·9
Rotherham	4·0	1·8	2·5
Sheffield	4·0	12·9	10·3
Bradford	5·5	15·8	12·1
Calderdale	3·3	2·1	3·8
Kirklees	4·8	5·7	3·3
Leeds	9·8	7·4	17·3
Wakefield	5·8	1·8	6·4
Gateshead	2·8	3·4	3·4
Newcastle	3·5	2·3	5·0
North Tyne	3·0	1·8	3·2
South Tyne	3·5	4·7	2·9
Sunderland	3·5	3·4	5·6
Isles of Scilly	0·3	0·0	n/a
Avon	7·6	6·1	7·5
Bedfordshire	14·4	3·3	5·0
Berkshire	12·4	12·7	n/a
Bucks	10·3	12·2	7·2
Cambridgeshire	14·9	9·6	17·7
Cheshire	26·2	11·7	25·1
Cleveland	8·3	5·0	5·8
Cornwall	10·8	4·7	7·5
Cumbria	4·3	5·7	6·0
Derbyshire	15·4	12·0	13·2
Devon	10·1	9·5	13·0
Dorset	8·6	4·5	4·0
Durham	7·1	4·5	4·2
East Sussex	7·1	8·9	11·7
Essex	29·3	10·0	n/a
Glouc s	7·3	5·9	6·6
Hampshire	29·3	22·8	28·2
Hereford and Worcs	12·9	4·1	n/a
Hertfordshire	7·8	11·3	12·3
Humberside	19·4	8·5	12·7
Isle of Wight	3·0	0·8	2·1
Kent	23·2	7·5	13·1
Lancashire	15·4	7·1	12·1
Leicestershire	11·6	6·9	11·7
Lincolnshire	7·8	7·4	7·7
Norfolk	12·4	6·5	7·8
North Yorks	11·4	12·0	7·0
Northants	13·4	6·2	5·5
Northumberland	6·8	1·8	1·9
Nottinghamshire	14·9	5·5	n/a
Oxfordshire	3·5	3·3	7·0
Shropshire	8·8	3·1	4·8
Somerset	4·5	3·5	n/a
Staffordshire	21·2	7·8	8·8
Suffolk	12·9	5·7	11·6
Surrey	12·9	12·9	21·1
Warwickshire	6·3	3·4	3·8
West Sussex	5·5	7·6	8·3
Wiltshire	4·5	7·8	4·2

Notes:
1. n/a indicates data not available.
2. expenditure is given in 1990-91 prices, rounded to the nearest £0·1 m; it includes provision from within the Department of the Environment's Urban Programme, and covers nursery, primary, secondary and special education.

Correspondence

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what date he received the letter dated 12 May from Mrs. Linda Bettany of Sandycroft C. P. school, concerning resources and class size; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Mrs. Bettany addressed her letter of 12 May to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who has ministerial responsibility for the matters she raises.

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the operation of standard assessment tasks.

Mr. Fallon: Consultations have recently opened on the statutory orders on testing for next year. Copies of the consultation documents have been placed in the Library. My right hon. and learned Friend has emphasised his commitment to review this summer's operation before deciding on the exact form of tests for next year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will appoint extra teachers to primary schools where standard assessment tasks are carried out.

Mr. Fallon: The appointment and deployment of teachers is a matter for local education authorities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations he has had with *(a)* teachers and *(b)* head teachers concerning standard assessment tasks.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has had extensive discussions with teachers and head teachers on this issue, and will continue to do so.

Cash Limits

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any changes to announce to cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimates, the cash limits for class XI, vote 1, schools, research and miscellaneous services, and class XI, vote 2, higher and further education, will be amended. The cash limit changes are as follows:

Class and Vote	*Current cash limit* £	*Change* £	*Revised cash limit* £
XI.1	713,445,000	− 582,000	712,863,000
XI.2	2,919,806,000	−3,521,000	2,916,285,000

The decrease on class XI, vote 1 results from the appropriation in aid of contributions from the Welsh Office to certain programmes which are on a joint England and Wales basis.

The decrease on class XI, vote 2 results partly from the appropriation in aid of contributions from Wales to the programme of bursaries for the initial training of teachers in shortage subjects. The remainder of the decrease results from the transfer of responsibility to regional health authorities for manpower planning to meet NHS needs across a range of professions allied to medicine and the accompanying costs of training courses. The decrease is net of an increase in provision for the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to cover the costs to higher education institutions of providing two-year diploma in social work courses to replace certificate in social services courses run in further education colleges. Funding for this will be transferred from the Department of Health.

Student Awards

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will announce the rates of supplementary allowances payable within the mandatory student award in 1991-92.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary regulations which will be laid in due course, supplementary allowances payable within the mandatory student award by local education authorities in England and Wales will be increased in the academic year 1991-92. In most cases, the rises will be broadly in line with the overall increase in student support through the loan and basic grant together which I announced on 22 May, *Official Report*, columns *499-500*. I am placing details of the supplementary allowances in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Swan Hunter

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Prime Minister if he will visit Swan Hunter Shipbuilders on Tyneside.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Professional Association of Teachers

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure that the Professional Association of Teachers is recognised in the determination of statutory and non-statutory pay and conditions of employment in each part of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In England and Wales, the Government recognise the Professional Association of Teachers and consults it on statutory pay and conditions. For the future, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill will require the new review body, which will deal with statutory pay and conditions, to invite evidence from representative bodies, such as the Professional Association of Teachers. The determination of non-statutory pay and conditions is a matter for local education authorities and the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools.

In Scotland, the Scottish joint negotiation committee determines the statutory pay and conditions of service for school teachers. The Professional Association of Teachers is represented on the committee. In Northern Ireland, the association has not yet met the minimum membership requirement to satisfy the conditions laid down for representation on the Northern Ireland Teachers Council. Under the council's constitution, this is a precondition for representation on its negotiating committee for teachers' pay and conditions of service.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening, I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

10 Downing Street (Decorations)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what alterations he has made to the internal furnishing decorations within No. 10 Downing street since he became Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister *[holding reply 3 June]:* None.

ENERGY

Cash Limits

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Wakeham: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised and new estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit for class V, vote 2 will be reduced by £7,915,000 from £329,164,000 to £321,249,000. The cash limit for class V, vote 3, will be reduced by £4,392,000 from £46,127,000 to £41,735,000. The running costs limit for the Department will be reduced by £5,530,000 from £49,507,000 to £43,977,000.

These reductions reflect the transfer of ministerial responsibility for the regulation of offshore safety to the Secretary of State for Employment. This follows my announcement to the House on 12 November 1990, columns 329-345.

The cash limit for class V, vote 9, which is a new vote providing for advisers' fees in connection with preliminary work on the privatisation of the coal industry, will be £1,000,000.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* There is one dedicated energy manager in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is FCO policy that all staff should be aware of the energy policies and the need for conservation. It is therefore impossible to identify the number of person-years devoted to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* It is not possible to provide the information in the detail requested as the figures are not readily available. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office only assumed direct responsibility for its fuel and utilities accounts in April 1990, before when they were paid by the Property Services Agency.

In 1989-90, a total of £55,360 (£60,730 in 1990-91 terms) was invested in improving energy efficiency in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In 1990-91, the cash figure was £57,000, but in addition, the need for energy conservation was drawn to the attention of all staff working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* An energy survey, including an energy audit, of the main Foreign and Commonwealth Office building in Whitehall was carried out in 1990. The consultants concluded that annual savings of £53,000 could be achieved with no capital expenditure and further savings of £7,100 per annum could be achieved with a capital expenditure of £19,400. The majority of the recommendations have already been implemented.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ministerial visits were paid to each of the institutes of food research at *(a)* Norwich, *(b)* Reading and *(c)* Langford in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In the past five years, four ministerial visits have been made to the Agricultural and Food Research Council institute of food research: once to Norwich in 1986, twice to Norwich in 1987 and once to Reading in 1990.

EMPLOYMENT

Cash Limits

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to the cash limits or running costs limits for 1991-92 within the employment group.

Mr. Jackson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 1 (programmes and central services) will be increased by £90,392,000 from £2,266,849,000 to £2,357,241,000. The increase is the net result of an increase of £105,000,000 for employment training in England and Wales which was announced to the House on 26 February (partly offset by increased receipts of £8,408,000 from the Welsh Office, class XVI, vote 4); a transfer of £4,500,000 to class VI, vote 3 for offshore safety; a transfer of £1,186,000 to the Ministry of

Defence class I, vote 1 for payments to participants in their youth training scheme and a transfer of £514,000 to the Employment Service, class VI, vote 2 to reflect the transfer of certain responsibilities for common services and telecommunications.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 2 (Employment Service) will be increased by £17,514,000 from £436,335,000 to £453,849,000. The increase is the net result of an increase of £55,000,000 for the increased costs of the administration of unemployment benefit and associated payments (offset by increased receipts of £38,000,000 from the Department of Social Security, class XIV, vote 4) and additional provision to help unemployed people, including extra counselling and jobsearch seminars, and a transfer of provision of £514,000 from class VI, vote 1 to cover certain common service responsibilities.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 3 (Health and Safety Commission and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), will be increased by £18,071,000 from £160,735,000 to £178,806,000. The increase reflects the transfer of the offshore safety function to the Health and Safety Executive and is the net result of a transfer of £12,549,000 from the Department of Energy, class V, votes 2 and 3 (partly offset by increased associated receipts of £353,000); a transfer of £4,500,000 from class VI vote 1; a transfer of £300,000 from the Department of Transport, class VIII, vote 2 (More than offset by increased associated receipts of £325,000); and increased provision of £1,046,000 to cover superannuation payments for offshore safety staff (fully offset by increased receipts to the civil superannuation vote).

The single running cost limit for the Department of Employment (class VI votes 1 and 2) will be increased by £55,000,000 from £1,002,699,000 to £1,057,699,000.

The running cost limit for the Health and Safety Commission (class VI vote 3) will increase by £11,129,000 from £121,957,000 to £133,086,000.

These increases will be charged to the reserve and therefore will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in the east midlands in the textile or footwear industries; what percentage of the total work force of the east midlands this represents; what is his estimate of the number of people in the east midlands whose jobs depend upon the east midlands textile and footwear industry; if he will express this as a percentage of the total work force; and what the equivalent figures and percentages were in 1979.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Estimates of employment at the required level of detail are only available from the census of employment.

The available information is given in the table.

Textiles and Footwear

	Number	*Percentage of Civilian Workforce*
1981		
September[1]	103,000	5·7
1989		
September	75,000	3·9

[1] Earliest comparable date.

Tourism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a table showing nationally, regionally and for each district, the central Government provision in the standard spending assessment for tourist expenditure and the expenditure on and income from tourism; and if he will take steps to encourage local authorities to recover expenditure on tourism from a tourist tax.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

Tourism will have an impact on a range of services provided by local authorities. These include those provided by districts, for example, on environmental health, refuse collection and street cleaning. There will also be an impact on a wider range of services, predominantly provided by counties, such as police and highway maintenance. For some services it is possible for the authorities concerned to offset expenditure with income from charges; car parking and leisure facilities are the most obvious examples.

There is no explicit element for tourism within the standard spending assessment for an authority, but, within the standard spending assessment components for district and county level services generally, the annual number of domestic visitor nights spent in the authority is one of the factors used in the distribution. A table showing the amount of standard spending assessment distributed on the basis of this factor alone for 1991-92 has been placed in the Library.

I am also placing in the Library a table showing the latest information on estimated central Government expenditure on tourism-related activities; and one on income from tourism as measured by the estimated spending of visitors.

On the question of a tourist tax, the Government have no specific proposals in this area. However, we are willing to consider as part of the local government review any suggestion for new local sources of revenue which might assist authorities in this area.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Agencies

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost of launching the Benefits Agency at *(a)* national, *(b)* area and *(c)* district levels.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member, and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost of launching the Contributions Agency at *(a)* national, *(b)* area and *(c)* district levels.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his assessment of the effect of the implementation of the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill upon entitlement to motability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The motability scheme will be available to people on the higher rate of the mobility component of disability living allowance in the same way as it is to people currently on mobility allowance. The extension of the higher rate of the mobility component to severely mentally handicapped people with severe behavioural problems means that more disabled people will have the opportunity to benefit from motability when DLA is introduced than at present.

Local Offices, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change there has been in the numbers of claims and the time involved in *(a)* the assessment of a claim and *(b)* the notification of the assessment to the claimant in his Department's offices in the Doncaster area, following the installation of computer systems.

Miss Widdecombe: The delivery of social security benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member, and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Pensioners

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to change the pension rules so that expatriate Britons can have their pensions upgraded as they are in the United Kingdom; and how much such a move would cost.

Mr. Jack: Annual pension increases are paid to United Kingdom pensioners living in 32 overseas countries. We have no plans to extend the payment of these increases to all UK pensioners worldwide. Such a move would cost £337 million a year at April 1991 rates of benefit.

Mortgage Debt

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table for the past five financial years showing how much his Department spent servicing mortgage lending debt incurred by borrowing from building societies.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates of amounts included for mortgage interest in the assessment of supplementary benefit and, from 1988, income support, are given in the table for each of the past five years for which information is available.

Information about building society loans is not collected. The amounts shown relate to the interest on loans from all mortgage lenders. In 1989, some 281,000 claimants had an amount for mortgage interest included in their assessment. For the vast majority, the amount is less than £100·00 per week.

	£ million
1984	218·5
1986	351·2
1987	335·2
1988	285·6
1989	353·1

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries 1984-89.
Notes:
In 1985 the Annual Statistical Enquiry was not undertaken.
Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand.

Social Assistance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions are taking place with the European Community concerning the establishment of a minimum level of social assistance in each member state; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Officials have been taking part in preliminary discussions with the Commission and other member states on a draft Council recommendation on common criteria concerning social assistance schemes. The resultant draft has not yet been received by the Government, but the indications are that it will not present serious problems for the United Kingdom, which is one of the member states that already has a comprehensive scheme in the shape of income support.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there have been any changes in the cash limits or running costs limits of his Department for 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval on the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for class XIV vote 4 (Administration and Miscellaneous Services) will be increased by £42,658,000, from £1,838,770,000 to £1,881,428,000. The revision takes account of the work involved in the uprating of child benefit and national insurance contributions on company cars as announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement (£5,004,000); provision for the work carried out by the Department of Social Security on behalf of the Department of Employment (£4,589,000); a transfer to the Department of Health (class XIII vote 3) of £847,000; a transfer to the Home Office (class IX vote 3) of £4,000; a transfer from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (class XIII vote 6) of £269,000; a transfer from the Office of the Minister of the Civil Service (class XIX vote 1) of £10,000, an increase in agency payments to the Department of Employment (class VI vote 2) of £38,000,000 and a transfer from the civil superannuation vote (class XVIII vote 4) of £40,000. The additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts of £4,403,000. The balance will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

In addition, running cost changes result from a transfer to the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) (£1,965,000) for the running costs of the Belfast social security centre. There will be a corresponding increase on the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) vote 3 Administration and Miscellaneous Services; also a reduction of £50,000 to take account of a variation from a previously anticipated pattern of expenditure.

As a result of these changes, the running cost limit of the Department of Social Security is increased by £8,605,000 from £2,107,212,000 to £2,115,817,000.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will recalculate the tables provided, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) *Official Report*, 27 March, columns *443-48*, to include the effects of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 8 May 1991]:* The information is set out in the tables. All assumptions are as set out in the published tax-benefit model tables. Each family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to its size and to pay estimated average rent and community charge.

The weighted average headline community charge for Great Britain in accordance with the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act is £246 a year as from April. The tables have been adjusted to take into account all the other April Budget proposals/benefit changes, as well as the proposed changes in October.

It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical rents so they do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay.

Single person (aged 25 or over)

	£ per week
Assumed rent	21·59
Assumed Community Charge	4·70

Gross earnings	Tax	National Insurance	Take home pay	Rent rebate	Community Charge benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and Community Charge
60·00	0·00	2·18	57·82	13·03	1·78	72·63	46·34
80·00	4·16	3·98	71·86	3·90	0·00	75·76	49·47
100·00	9·16	5·78	85·06	0·00	0·00	85·06	58·77
120·00	14·16	7·58	98·26	0·00	0·00	98·26	71·97
140·00	19·16	9·38	111·46	0·00	0·00	111·46	85·17
160·00	24·16	11·18	124·66	0·00	0·00	124·66	98·37
180·00	29·16	12·98	137·86	0·00	0·00	137·86	111·57
200·00	34·16	14·78	151·06	0·00	0·00	151·06	124·77

Married Couple

	£ per week
Assumed rent	21·59
Assumed Community Charge	9·40

Gross earnings	Tax	National Insurance	Take home pay	Rent rebate	Community Charge Benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and Community Charge
60·00	0·00	2·18	57·82	21·59	7·52	86·93	55·94
80·00	0·00	3·98	76·02	19·14	6·95	102·11	71·12
100·00	0·89	5·78	93·33	7·89	4·36	105·58	74·59
120·00	5·89	7·58	106·53	0·00	2·38	108·91	77·92
140·00	10·89	9·38	119·73	0·00	0·40	120·13	89·14
160·00	15·89	11·18	132·93	0·00	0·00	132·93	101·94
180·00	20·89	12·98	146·13	0·00	0·00	146·13	115·14
200·00	25·89	14·78	159·33	0·00	0·00	159·33	128·34

Married Couple with one child aged 11

	£ per week
Child Benefit	9·25
Assumed rent	23·82
Assumed Community Charge	9·40

Gross earnings	Tax	National Insurance	Take home pay	Family credit	Rent rebate	Community Charge Benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and Community Charge
60·00	0·00	2·18	57·82	54·40	10·48	4·44	136·39	103·17
80·00	0·00	3·98	76·02	44·76	4·92	3·16	138·11	104·89
100·00	0·89	5·78	93·33	32·64	1·54	2·38	139·14	105·92
120·00	5·89	7·58	106·53	23·40	0·00	1·78	140·96	107·74
140·00	10·89	9·38	119·73	14·16	0·00	1·19	144·33	111·11
160·00	15·89	11·18	132·93	4·92	0·00	0·60	147·70	114·48
180·00	20·89	12·98	146·13	0·00	0·00	0·00	155·38	122·16
200·00	25·89	14·78	159·33	0·00	0·00	0·00	168·58	135·36

Married couple with two children aged 8 and 11

	£ per week
Child benefit	16·75
Assumed rent	26·03
Assumed Community Charge	9·40

Gross earnings / Charge	Tax	NI	Take home pay	Family credit	Rent rebate	Community charge benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and community charge
60·00	0·00	2·18	57·82	64·10	10·35	3·90	152·92	117·49
80·00	0·00	3·98	76·02	54·46	4·79	2·62	154·64	119·21
100·00	0·89	5·78	93·33	42·34	1·41	1·84	155·67	120·24
120·00	5·89	7·58	106·53	33·10	0·00	1·24	157·62	122·19
140·00	10·89	9·38	119·73	23·86	0·00	0·65	160·99	125·56
160·00	15·89	11·18	132·93	14·62	0·00	0·06	164·36	128·93
180·00	20·89	12·98	146·13	5·38	0·00	0·00	168·26	132·83
200·00	25·89	14·78	159·33	0·00	0·00	0·00	176·08	140·65

Married couple with three children aged 8, 11 and 15

	£ per week
Child Benefit	24·25
Assumed Rent	26·03
Assumed Community Charge	9·40

Gross earnings / Charge	Tax	National Insurance	Take home pay	Family credit	Rent rebate	Community charge benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and community charge
60·00	0·00	2·18	57·82	80·20	8·01	3·36	173·64	138·21
80·00	0·00	3·98	76·02	70·56	2·45	2·08	175·36	139·93
100·00	0·89	5·78	93·33	58·44	0·00	1·30	177·32	141·89
120·00	5·89	7·58	106·53	49·20	0·00	0·70	180·68	145·25
140·00	10·89	9·38	119·73	39·96	0·00	0·11	184·05	148·62
160·00	15·89	11·18	132·93	30·72	0·00	0·00	187·90	152·47
180·00	20·89	12·98	146·13	21·48	0·00	0·00	191·86	156·43
200·00	25·89	14·78	159·33	12·24	0·00	0·00	195·82	160·39

Married Couple with Four children aged 3, 8, 11 and 15

	£ per week
Child Benefit	31·75
Assumed rent	26·03
Assumed Community Charge	9·40

Gross earnings / Charge	Tax	National Insurance	Take home pay	Family Credit	Rent rebate	Community Charge Benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and Community Charge
60·00	0·00	2·18	57·82	89·90	5·67	2·82	187·96	152·53
80·00	0·00	3·98	76·02	80·26	0·00	1·54	189·57	154·14
100·00	0·89	5·78	93·33	68·14	0·00	0·76	193·98	158·55
120·00	5·89	7·58	106·53	58·90	0·00	0·16	197·34	161·91
140·00	10·89	9·38	119·73	49·66	0·00	0·00	201·14	165·71
160·00	15·89	11·18	132·93	40·42	0·00	0·00	205·10	169·67
180·00	20·89	12·98	146·13	31·18	0·00	0·00	209·06	173·63
200·00	25·89	14·78	159·33	21·94	0·00	0·00	213·02	177·59

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the percentages for national insurance contributions at each income band, using constant 1991 prices, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The information requested is in the table.

National Insurance contribution (NIC) percentage rates[1] 1979 onwards

Tax Year	*Employees' NIC rate*	*Employers' NIC rate*	*Weekly income bands at which different NIC rates apply[3]* £
1979-80	6·5	13·5[2]	Single percentage rate applied to all earnings between lower and upper earnings limits
1980-81	6·75	13·7[2]	
1981-82	7·75	13·7[2]	
1982-83	8·75	13·7[2]	
1983-84	9·00	11·95[2]	
1984-85	9·00	11·45[2]	
1985-86 (to 5 October 1985)	9·00	10·45[2]	
6 October 1985 to 5 April 1986	5·00	5·00	35·50—54·99
	7·00	7·00	55·00—89·99
	9·00	9·00	90·00—129·99
	9·00	10·45	130·00—265·00
	NIL	10·45	Above 265·00
1986-87	5·00	5·00	38·00—59·99
	7·00	7·00	60·00—94·99
	9·00	9·00	95·00—139·99
	9·00	10·45	140·00—285·00
	NIL	10·45	Above 285·00
1987-88	5·00	5·00	39·00—64·99
	7·00	7·00	65·00—99·99
	9·00	9·00	100·00—149·99
	9·00	10·45	150·00—295·00
	NIL	10·45	Above 295·00
1988-89	5·00	5·00	41·00—69·99
	7·00	7·00	70·00—104·99
	9·00	9·00	105·00—154·99
	9·00	10·45	155·00—305·00
	NIL	10·45	Above 305·00
1989-90	5·00	5·00	43·00—74·99
	7·00	7·00	75·00—114·99
	9·00	9·00	115·00—164·99
	9·00	10·45	165·00—325·00
	NIL	10·45	Above 325·00

			Employee	*Employer*
5 October 1989 to 5 April 1990	2·00	5·00	43·00	43·00 to 74·99
	9·00	7·00	43·01	75·00 to 114·99
		9·00	to	115·00 to 164·99
		10·45	325·00	165·00 or more
1990-91	2·00	5·00	46·00	46·00 to 79·99
	9·00	7·00	46·01	80·00 to 124·99
		9·00	to	125·00 to 174·99
		10·45	350·00	175·00 or more
1991-92	2·00	4·60	52·00	52·00 to 84·99
	9·00	6·60	52·01	85·00 to 129·99
		8·60	to	130·00 to 184·99
		10·40	390·00	185·00 or more

Notes:

[1] All rates are in respect of not contracted-out employment.

[2] Includes National Insurance surcharge.

[3] Percentage rates are applied to *all* earnings once the level of earnings reaches a certain point: In 1986-87, for example, NICs would have been levied at a single rate of 7 per cent. on gross earnings of £65·00.

[4] All figures shown are those current at the time. The lower and upper earnings limits for the payment of NICs, and the earnings bands between those levels, increase broadly in line with price inflation.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he has made in setting up the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Jack: Pursuant to my reply of 15 April at column 9-10, no final decisions have yet been made on the location of administration centres for the Child Support Agency, since its establishment depends on the passage of the Child Support Bill currently before the House. However, for planning purposes the assumption is that there should be up to six new offices housing about 3,000 staff—in addition to the CSA staff who will be based in local offices of the Department's Benefits Agency, making a total of about 4,500 in all. It is the Government's intention to locate the

new administration centres in different areas throughout the country as part of its policy of relocating civil service jobs.

Substantial progress has been made in identifying suitable locations with over 100 sites visited by my officials at 31 different locations. Detailed negotiations and discussions are being conducted about six particular locations in Falkirk, Belfast, Birkenhead, the black country (Dudley), Hastings and Plymouth—all of which appear to meet the criteria required for supporting a large CSA office. The discussions are aimed at establishing the ability of each location to meet the Department's accommodation specification, cost requirements and timetable. Once I am satisfied on all these matters, I will confirm the final decisions on the locations of the new administration centres. If successful, this will create new jobs for people in the travel-to-work areas in these six locations.

The Department's decision to locate the work of the new agency in different parts of the country should be seen in conjunction with the announcement earlier this year confirming the location of 700 more jobs in the north-east —at Newcastle—for the Contributions Agency, in addition to the 1,000 jobs for Newcastle announced last year. A further 800 DSS jobs are due to move to Leeds from mid-1992 as part of the initiative to relocate work from DSS headquarters offices in London and Southampton. From April 1992, the administration of the new benefits for disabled people will require about 1,100 staff who will be located in a number of areas spread around the country. Relocation of work from London social security offices has been in progress since 1989 and a total of over 1,500 new jobs have been created in Glasgow, Belfast and Ashton-in-Makerfield. By the end of 1992, it is estimated that about 83 per cent. of jobs in DSS will be in locations outside London.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland Railways

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what would be the cost of providing two years' pensionable pay when death occurs during service for employees of Northern Ireland Railways; and what is the cost of the present scheme.

Mr. Needham: Employees of Northern Ireland Railways qualify for membership of the pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee under the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972.

The cost of providing benefits under the NILGOSC scheme is not recorded on an individual basis. It would not be possible, therefore, without an actuarial valuation to calculate the cost of providing two years' pensionable pay when death occurs during service.

The cost to existing members of the NILGOSC scheme is 5 per cent. of salary for manual employees and 6 per cent. of salary for non-manual employees with employing authorities contributing 6·2 per cent.

Employees of Northern Ireland Railways are, of course, entitled to join a private pension scheme, the benefits and cost of which may differ from the NILGOSC scheme.

Regional Waste Licensing

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions are being made to establish a regional waste licensing system for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The Government are currently preparing proposals for a comprehensive waste management strategy for Northern Ireland which will take into account comments received from district councils on the Aspinwall report. The proposed strategy will be the subject of consultation in due course.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what resources are being allocated to ensure that stated targets for listed buildings, surveying historic monuments and sites and designating conservation areas can be met.

Mr. Needham: In 1991-92, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will spend £5·1 million, including staff costs and programmes expenditure, on tasks or functions related to historic building and monuments. The Department remains on course for meeting the targets set out in Government's White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cmd 1200).

Street Lighting

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria are used to decide whether any part of a road in the Downpatrick and Craigavon divisions of the Department of the Environment should be provided with street lighting.

Mr. Needham: The criteria used to decide whether any part of a road in the Downpatrick and Craigavon divisions should be provided with street lighting are traffic volumes, road safety, and the density of housing and other developments.

Road Improvement Schemes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what major road improvement schemes have been carried out in the Downpatrick and Craigavon divisions between 1 March 1984 and 31 March 1991.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is:

DOWNPATRICK DIVISION

Balloo Road, Bangor—Stage 1
Union Bridge, Lisburn
Lisburn through pass; Benson Street-Longstone Street
Dunmurry by-pass—Stage 2A
Lisburn through pass; Governors Road-Laganbank Road
Balloo Road, Bangor—Stage 2
Hillsborough by-pass; Lisburn Road junction
Shimna Bridges, Newcastle
Donaghadee Road, Newtownards
Dunmurry by-pass—Stage 2C

CRAIGAVON DIVISON

Patrick Street/Borans Hill, Newry
Upper Dromore Road, Warrenpoint
A1—Ballintaggart Crest
A1—Climbing Lane at Customs Station, Newry
Kilmorey Street junction, Newry
A1—Edenordinary final surfacing
A1—Beechill
Banbridge by-pass bridge

Newry by-pass—Stage 1
Banbridge by-pass dualling
Newry—Canal Street/Downshire Road link
Tandragee Road/Bridge Street, Portadown

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what moneys have been invested in major road improvement schemes in each road division in the Six Counties between 1 March 1985 and 31 March 1991.

Mr. Needham: Expenditure on major road improvement schemes in the past six financial years has been:

Expenditure

£ thousands

Financial year	*HQ*[1]	*Ballymena*	*Belfast*	*Coleraine*	*Craigavon*	*Downpatrick*	*Omagh*	*Total*
1985-86	612	906	3,154	757	1,434	985	1,568	9,414
1986-87	418	1,014	3,268	1,505	1,804	1,092	879	9,980
1987-88	690	1,071	3,169	1,821	1,784	890	793	10,218
1988-89	1,755	3,063	1,999	986	1,844	1,827	694	12,168
1989-90	100	1,895	6,510	1,298	1,233	2,217	3,144	16,397
[2]1990-91	35	1,522	5,012	1,065	1,300	2,789	3,339	15,062

[1] Relates to specific schemes which were handled centrally.
[2] Provisional at this stage.

Ferry Services

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the increased fares on the ferry service between Strangford and Portaferry.

Mr. Needham: One representation to the most recent increase in fares has been received from Down district council.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much it cost to operate the Strangford to Portaferry ferry service in each of the years from 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1991.

Mr. Needham: Operating costs for the Strangford to Portaferry ferry service were:

Financial year	*Cost (£'000)*
1985-86	484
1986-87	553
1987-88	526
1988-89	674
1989-90	822
1990-91	783

Concessionary Fares

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce reduced transport fares for women on reaching retirement age at 60 years.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is precluded by the provisions of the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 from making a distinction on age grounds between men and women. The qualifying age for concessionary half-fare travel by bus and rail in Northern Ireland is 65 years for men and women, and there are no plans to alter it.

Youth Services

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the education budget has been allocated to youth services in each year from 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1991 in the Southern education and library board.

Dr. Mawhinney:

Year	*Percentage of recurrent block grant allocated to youth service*	*Percentage of capital grant allocated to youth service*
1985-86	2·88	1·80
1986-87	2·80	2·14
1987-88	3·03	2·10
1988-89	3·14	1·09
1989-90	3·10	0·84
1990-91	2·74	1·04

Footpaths and Bridleways

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by year for the past 10 years, and for the current year to date, the number of *(a)* public footpaths and *(b)* public bridleways that have been (i) created and (ii) closed to the general public.

Mr. Needham: The creation and closure of public footpaths and bridleways is a district council responsibility and the information sought is not held centrally.

Renewable Energy Programme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Northern Ireland will be included in the review of the renewable energy programme.

Mr. Needham: Yes.

Fair Employment Commission

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards correcting the under-employment of Protestants on the staff of the Fair Employment Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I understand that the 1991 monitoring return made by the commission shows that 30, 53 per cent., of its employees are Protestant and 27, 47 per cent., are Roman Catholic. The commission's approach to the religious composition of its staff, including its wish to attract more applicants from the Protestant side of the community, was set out in its press release of 16 October 1990, a copy of which was placed in the Library.

Detention Centres (Lay Visitors)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the criteria for appointments by the police authority in Northern Ireland for the selection of lay visitors to non-paramilitary suspects in Royal Ulster Constabulary detention centres.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The appointment of lay visitors is a matter for the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND

Opera House Edinburgh

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for an opera house on the site of the Empire theatre, Edinburgh; and what public bodies are involved in taking this project forward.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been kept advised of Edinburgh district council's plans to convert the Empire theatre into an international venue for opera, ballet, concerts and drama. In addition to the district council, Lothian regional council, Lothian and Edinburgh enterprise company, Historic Scotland, the Scottish tourist board and the Scottish Arts Council are likely to be involved in the project.

Scottish Agricultural College

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which agricultural advice services provided by the Scottish agricultural college are wholly publicly funded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Services which are undertaken for the public good: that is, the benefits accrue to the whole community and not only to the individual. They include the following.

(a) General advice on what is needed to conform with statutory requirements (Such as those on pesticides, health and safety at work or animal welfare).
(b) All general advice on animal welfare.
(c) Initial general advice on conservation and diversification.
(d) General education and training for the rural community.
(e) Veterinary investigation service tests related to notifiable diseases.
(f) Monitoring services on patterns of animal health, welfare and infertility.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applies, and by what authority, in determining which advisory work of the Scottish agricultural college shall be partly publicly funded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Authority for the provision of agricultural advice is derived from section 4(4) of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911. Advice which is partly publicly funded is advice the benefits of which accrue partly to the community and partly to the individual user. It includes the following:

Specified services which would otherwise be fully chargeable but which are supplied to crofters at a reduced rate because of the effect of low income and relatively poor resources in the crofting area.

Services which are charged at a standard price, which does not cover the cost of delivering them in remote or otherwise disadvantaged areas.

Work associated with animal and crop disease surveillance.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the advisory work of the Scottish agricultural college which is partly publicly funded is chargeable to the client.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the year 1989-90, charges for partly publicly funded advice accounted for some 25 per cent. of total costs.

Arts (Buildings)

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of those buildings used for the arts in Scotland which have been built, renovated or improved with Government funds since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table lists the properties occupied by the three Scottish national institutions, which are directly funded by my Department through building programme grant in aid. All of these properties have, to varying degrees, been subject to building or improvement works since 1979. In addition, the Government provided £9·4 million—on an exceptional basis—towards the construction of the Burrell gallery in Glasgow.

In addition, my Department supports the development of local authority museums, galleries and libraries through the revenue support grant. Other support for the arts in Scotland, including an element for building projects, is provided by the Office of Arts and Libraries, through grants to arts bodies by the Scottish Arts Council.

PROPERTIES OCCUPIED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Institution and Property

National Galleries of Scotland
- National Gallery of Scotland, the Mound, Edinburgh
- Royal Scottish Academy, Princes Street, Edinburgh
- National Portrait Gallery, Queen Street, Edinburgh
- Gallery of Modern Art, Belford Road, Edinburgh
- Store, 140 Causewayside, Edinburgh

National Museums of Scotland
- Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh
- National Museum of Antiquities, Queen Street, Edinburgh
- York Buildings, Queen Street, Edinburgh
- Leith Custom House, Leith, Edinburgh
- Scottish United Services Museum, Edinburgh Castle
- Museum of Flight, East Fortune Airfield, East Lothian
- Scottish Agricultural Museum, Ingliston, Edinburgh
- Shambellie House, Dumfriesshire
- Biggar Gasworks Museum, Lanarkshire
- Store, Port Edgar, South Queensferry
- Store, West Granton Road, Edinburgh
- Store, Newbattle Abbey, Dalkeith
- Store, Brighton Street, Edinburgh

National Library of Scotland
- George IV Bridge, Edinburgh
- Causewayside Building, Edinburgh
- Offices, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh
- Law Court Buildings, Parliament Square, Edinburgh
- Bindery, Sighthill, Edinburgh
- Store (shared), Sighthill, Edinburgh

Specific major capital building and maintenance projects since 1979 include (the figures are rounded to the nearest £0·5m):

1. The conversion of the former John Watson's School to become the Gallery of Modern Art. (£3·5 million).

2. The construction of the first phase of the National Library's accommodation at Causewayside, Edinburgh. (£11 million).

3. Restoration and repair works at the Royal Museum of Scotland. (£8 million, on completion).

4. Stonework restoration at the Findlay Building in Queen Street, Edinburgh (home of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland). (£4 million).

5. Refurbishment of the National Gallery of Scotland. (£1 million).

6. Recladding of the hangars at the Museum of Flight, East Fortune Airfield, East Lothian. (£1 million).

Construction work has now begun on the second phase of the National Library's Causewayside Building (which is

costing £22 million), and I have committed resources of £22 million (exclusive of VAT and fees) to the construction of the new Museum of Scotland. Other major projects to be financed by the Government are: the provision of new storage accommodation for the National Museums (over £4 million), a major programme of fire precaution works at the National Library's HQ Building in George IV Bridge, Edinburgh (£4 million); and restoration work at the Royal Scottish Academy Building in Princes Street, Edinburgh (over £5 million).

Footpaths and Bridleways

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by year for the last 10 years, and for the current year to date, the number of *(a)* public footpaths and *(b)* public bridleways that have been (i) created and (ii) closed to the general public.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not kept centrally.

Fish Farms

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are in place for formal consultation when marine fish farms, which were established before the formal consultation procedures were introduced in 1989, apply to the Crown Estate for the renewal of their sea bed lease.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Each lease will be subject to individual review by the Crown Estate as and when it falls due for renewal. The Crown Estate will undertake any consultations it considers necessary in the light of the circumstances at each review.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the Crown Estate's very sensitive areas in Scottish waters and the number of fish farm leases allocated in each;

(2) how many sea bed leases for *(a)* salmon farms and *(b)* shellfish farms are located in areas designated as very sensitive areas by the Crown Estate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table shows the number of sea bed leases allocated to salmon and shellfish farms in the very sensitive areas defined and identified by the Crown Estate:

Very sensitive areas on the mainland coast		*Salmon farms*	*Shellfish farms*
1. Loch Laxford/Loch a'Chadh-Fi	Sutherland	3	3
2. Loch Glendhu/Loch Glencoul	Sutherland	1	1
3. Loch Broom/Loch Kanaird	Ross-shire	2	1
4. Inner Little Loch Broom	Ross-shire	1	1
5. Inner Loch Ewe/Loch Thurnaig	Ross-shire	3	4
6. Inner Loch Gairloch	Ross-shire	0	3
7. Inner Loch Torridon/Loch Shieldaig	Ross-shire	3	4
8. Loch Carron	Ross-shire	1	4
9. Loch na Cairidh/Caolas Scalpay	Skye	1	2
10. Loch Brittle/Loch Scavaig	Skye	0	0
11. Loch na Dal	Skye	0	1
12. Loch Alsh/Loch Duich	Lochaber	3	7
13. Inner Loch Hourn	Lochaber	1	1
14. Inner Loch Nevis	Lochaber	0	0
15. Loch nan Uamb	Lochaber	0	0
16. Inner Loch Sunart	Lochaber	6	7
17. Inner/Outer Loch Leven	Lochaber	2	3
18. Tobermory Bay, Mull	Argyll	1	1
19. East Lismore	Argyll	1	0
20. Inner Loch Creran	Argyll	0	0
21. Inner Loch Etice	Argyll	1	6
22. Sound of Kerrera/Loch Feochan	Argyll	1	5
23. Loch Melfort/Shuna Sound	Argyll	2	2
24. Loch Craignish	Argyll	1	2
25. Loch Sween	Argyll	2	2

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sea bed leases for marine fish farms are now in force in Scotland, for *(a)* finfish and *(b)* shellfish; and how many of each were established before the formal consultation procedures were introduced in 1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand from the Crown Estate that there are currently 308 sea bed leases for finfish farming and 392 for shellfish farming off the coast of Scotland. Of these 158 finfish and 112 shellfish leases were granted before October 1986.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of extant sea bed leases for marine salmon farms in Scotland, including *(a)* map reference, *(b)* area in hectares, *(c)* date of lease agreements, *(d)* date of expiry of lease, *(e)* production limits and when imposed or revised and *(f)* whether each application was subjected to (i) the formal consultation procedure, (ii) statutory environmental assessment and (iii) consideration by the advisory committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand from the Crown Estate that the information requested at points *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* is not available in the form requested except at disproportionate cost to public funds. Lists of leases giving basic information are, however, made available by the Crown Estate on request. I am also informed that Crown Estate leases granted under the formal consultation procedures contain conditions specifying the equipment which may be installed; the consequential production limits are not separately listed.

All new site applications submitted to the Crown Estate have been subject to the formal consultation procedures since October 1986, and to the provisions of the Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988 which came into effect on 15 July 1988. One application has met the criteria for which such an assessment is required.

One case has been referred to the advisory committee for its consideration.

Whisky

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much whisky was sold in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* in export sales for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The statistics requested are as follows:

Whisky sales—1981-1990
(million litres of pure alcohol)

	United Kingdom sales	*Export sales*
1981	47·71	244·24
1982	44·75	251·28
1983	44·48	227·84

	United Kingdom sales	Export sales
1984	43·36	231·29
1985	46·15	225·89
1986	45·64	236·19
1987	44·60	240·17
1988	45·18	245·94
1989	43·03	242·49
1990	41·52	238·75

Source: Scotch Whisky Industry Review 1990.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of total whisky sales in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* export sales was made up by malt whisky in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The statistics requested are as follows:

Sales of malt whisky—1981 to 1990
Proportion of market by volume (per cent.)

	United Kingdom	Export
1981	1·7	10·6
1982	2·3	10·3
1983	2·1	12·3
1984	2·6	13·1
1985	2·6	10·4
1986	2·8	11·4
1987	3·3	10·4
1988	3·6	11·2
1989	4·0	12·2
1990	4·4	12·8

Source: "Scotch Whisky Industry Review" 1990.

Substandard Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the number of houses in Renfrew district which are below minimum required standards; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* houses of all forms of tenure which are below tolerable standard, *(b)* local authority houses which have rising and penetrating dampness, *(c)* Scottish Homes houses which have rising and penetrating dampness, *(d)* local authority houses with condensation and rising and penetrating dampness and *(e)* Scottish Homes houses with condensation and rising and penetrating dampness, in (i) Renfrew district and (ii) Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office does not make estimates of houses that are below minimum required standards.

Local authorities' estimates of the number of dwellings in their districts below the tolerable standard at 31 March 1990 were published in tables 16 and 17 of the "Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin HSG/1991/2". Copies were sent to all Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the Library.

Local authorities provide estimates of the numbers of local authority dwellings affected by condensation and dampness to the Scottish Office each year. The figures for Renfrew district and Scotland setting out the position as at 31 March 1990 are shown in the table. Comparable information for Scottish Homes stock is not held centrally.

Local authority dwellings affected by condensation and dampness as at 31 March 1990

	Rising and penetrating damp only	Condensation only	Condensation and rising and penetrating damp
Renfrew district	0	0	8,603
Scotland	62,185	132,612	83,075

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about investment in housing for disabled people; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A small number of local authorities have made such representations in recent months in the context of housing capital allocations for 1991-92, and these were taken into account when decisions on final allocations were made in March. The Government have made gross housing capital allocations to local authorities for 1991-92 of £452·5 million on the HRA block for investment in authorities' own housing stock and £111·1 million on the non-HRA block for investment in private sector housing. It is for local authorities to make decisions on investment in housing for disabled people, in the light of local priorities and the resources available.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking to improve transport for people with disabilities in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office works closely with the Department of Transport's disability unit to ensure that public transport is easier to use and that personal mobility is increased for disabled people. We have made a grant of £20,000 available to Disability Scotland to enable it to run a mobility roadshow in Scotland, at the Ingliston exhibition centre from 20 to 22 September 1991. This will be the first event of its kind in Scotland, and will be modelled on the biennial event held at Crowthorne, Berkshire. It will assist disabled people in Scotland to make informed choices on the vehicles, equipment and mobility aids best suited to their requirements.

A Scottish Office official acts as an observer on the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, the statutory committee set up to advise the Government on transport and mobility matters relating to disabled people. Two of the 20 members of this committee are Scottish. The Scottish Office also has an observer on the access and mobility committee of Disability Scotland.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward proposals to confer on the police additional powers to prosecute those who abuse or illegally use orange badges intended only for the benefit of genuinely disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is already an offence for an able-bodied person to use a parking place reserved for an orange badge holder on public roads or in a local authority off-street car park which has been designated by an order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act

1984. It is also an offence for a non-badge-holder to display a badge on a vehicle which is parked illegally in circumstances where a badge holder would have been entitled to park. Both offences carry a maximum penalty of level 3 on the standard scale. However, in the light of comments made during debate on aspects of the orange badge scheme at the Committee stage of the Road Traffic Bill in another place, further consideration is being given to the introduction of an offence which would be committed by the display of an orange badge when the legitimate holder is not with the vehicle.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to launch a public campaign to discourage the abuse of parking in areas designated for *(a)* the specific use of disabled people and *(b)* the exclusive use of disabled people in possession of orange badges.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The regulations relating to the orange badge scheme of parking concessions have been the subject of a major review. The abuse of parking areas designated for orange badge holders was among the matters considered in the review. Appropriate publicity will be arranged when amending regulations are introduced to advise the public of the changes to the scheme and of the importance of respecting the concessions on parking for the disabled.

Housing Finance

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the housing authorities with capital debt at high enough levels to attract Government subsidy in each year for the past 10 years; if he will show the total of subsidy to each authority in each year; and if he will express the subsidy as per house.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A local housing authority receives housing support grant when estimated eligible expenditure exceeds estimated eligible income in respect of the authority's housing revenue account. The level of capital debt is one of the factors which influences estimated eligible expenditure. The amounts of housing support grant paid to individual authorities in each year since 1981-82, expressed as a total and as an amount per council house, are shown in the table.

	1981-82	
	HSG	*HSG per house*
	£	£
Berwickshire	1,038,356	366
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,154,679	235
Roxburgh	1,537,295	247
Tweeddale	109,055	66
Clackmannan	1,283,981	133
Falkirk	4,428,554	132
Stirling	1,016,562	77
Annandale and Eskdale	1,272,965	247
Nithsdale	100	0
Stewartry	542,539	217
Wigtown	767,726	164
Dunfermline	2,800,067	122
Kirkcaldy	3,077,166	117
North East Fife	979,538	122
Aberdeen	9,533,966	241
Banff and Buchan	4,343,622	336

	1981-82	
	HSG	*HSG per house*
	£	£
Gordon	2,379,107	390
Kincardine and Deeside	933,388	265
Moray	3,552,254	321
Badenoch and Strathspey	435,542	392
Caithness	876,132	207
Inverness	1,631,231	226
Lochaber	1,813,360	522
Nairn	251,993	219
Ross and Cromarty	4,199,542	672
Skye and Lochalsh	316,747	430
Sutherland	519,316	303
East Lothian	3,155,554	194
Edinburgh	7,869,440	140
Midlothian	1,791,607	136
West Lothian	2,182,016	99
Argyll and Bute	2,811,692	332
Bearsden and Milngavie	193,589	106
Clydebank	3,285,203	276
Clydesdale	578,477	60
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	117,762	27
Cumnock and Doon Valley	819,727	79
Cunninghame	2,744,500	118
Dumbarton	1,177,708	89
East Kilbride	98,060	61
Eastwood	15,462	8
Glasgow	44,099,691	254
Hamilton	3,243,635	141
Inverclyde	4,443,201	225
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1,885,952	103
Kyle and Carrick	2,807,798	155
Monklands	4,252,050	149
Motherwell	5,737,727	143
Renfrew	2,186,158	55
Strathkelvin	1,539,073	141
Angus	2,499,757	172
Dundee	5,285,879	131
Perth and Kinross	1,309,294	80
Orkney Islands	1,082,222	758
Shetland Islands	2,624,591	993
Western Isles	1,267,392	519

	1982-83	
	HSG	*HSG per house*
	£	£
Berwickshire	686,226	245
Ettrick and Lauderdale	552,583	114
Roxburgh	1,165,695	191
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	689,627	73
Falkirk	1,494,309	45
Stirling	1,335,195	101
Annandale and Eskdale	1,387,048	274
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	412,797	169
Wigtown	452,325	96
Dunfermline	683,115	30
Kirkcaldy	696,260	27
North East Fife	829,197	107
Aberdeen	7,089,761	180
Banff and Buchan	3,306,069	258
Gordon	2,240,622	377
Kincardine and Deeside	817,907	232

	1982-83 HSG £	1982-83 HSG per house £
Moray	2,301,798	209
Badenoch and Strathspey	505,386	457
Caithness	817,378	200
Inverness	1,375,208	198
Lochaber	1,383,564	402
Nairn	206,063	182
Ross and Cromarty	3,493,364	559
Skye and Lochalsh	316,309	434
Sutherland	477,942	285
East Lothian	2,079,858	130
Edinburgh	2,327,904	42
Midlothian	906,746	70
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,767,417	331
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	2,201,808	186
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	167,191	15
Cunninghame	745,237	32
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	37,292,928	217
Hamilton	1,543,988	67
Inverclyde	3,048,261	155
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	298,335	16
Kyle and Carrick	911,439	50
Monklands	3,222,528	113
Motherwell	3,296,551	83
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	1,198,935	111
Angus	1,221,795	86
Dundee	1,820,168	45
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	852,422	591
Shetland Islands	2,654,652	1,015
Western Isles	1,358,959	541

	1983-84 HSG £	1983-84 HSG per House £
Berwickshire	648,884	238
Ettrick and Lauderdale	373,420	79
Roxburgh	1,260,321	207
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	45,021	5
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	20,431	2
Annandale and Eskdale	1,574,069	311
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	414,643	169
Wigtown	255,317	55
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	309,583	41
Aberdeen	3,724,702	96
Banff and Buchan	2,437,206	193
Gordon	1,709,877	294
Kincardine and Deeside	972,194	279
Moray	1,987,151	182
Badenoch and Strathspey	515,570	466

	1983-84 HSG £	1983-84 HSG per House £
Caithness	819,544	204
Inverness	1,241,308	182
Lochaber	1,334,449	392
Nairn	265,393	241
Ross and Cromarty	3,091,946	500
Skye and Lochalsh	323,325	439
Sutherland	446,107	265
East Lothian	1,050,527	67
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,554,514	307
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	1,855,408	157
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	32,355,851	191
Hamilton	119,816	5
Inverclyde	1,865,250	96
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	447,952	25
Monklands	1,705,278	60
Motherwell	1,037,418	26
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	326,922	31
Angus	181,321	13
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	731,864	509
Shetland Islands	2,409,052	915
Western Isles	1,723,845	703

	1984-85 HSG £	1984-85 HSG per house £
Berwickshire	486,805	183
Ettrick and Lauderdale	107,262	24
Roxburgh	1,265,786	213
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,673,013	330
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	359,095	147
Wigtown	200,315	44
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	87,427	12
Aberdeen	3,053,523	80
Banff and Buchan	1,943,394	157
Gordon	1,940,317	342
Kincardine and Deeside	854,052	246
Moray	1,790,081	167
Badenoch and Strathspey	487,297	442
Caithness	826,248	207

	1984-85 HSG £	1984-85 HSG per house £
Inverness	1,305,145	191
Lochaber	1,225,816	365
Nairn	227,117	210
Ross and Cromarty	3,241,650	527
Skye and Lochalsh	394,993	534
Sutherland	467,987	277
East Lothian	392,369	26
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,308,945	278
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	1,774,590	151
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	32,269,404	191
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	1,162,804	60
Kilmarnock and Boudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	1,956,032	69
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	2,775	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	779,233	531
Shetland Islands	2,764,219	1,049
Western Islands	1,863,547	762

	1985-86 HSG £	1985-86 HSG per house £
Berwickshire	446,429	171
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,306,156	223
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,759,500	347
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	343,400	142
Wigtown	95,565	21
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	2,260,303	60
Banff and Buchan	1,599,685	132
Gordon	1,800,235	326
Kincardine and Deeside	942,305	276
Moray	1,509,258	142
Badenoch and Strathspey	497,879	446
Caithness	750,997	191
Inverness	1,510,450	224

	1985-86 HSG £	1985-86 HSG per house £
Lochaber	1,398,166	431
Nairn	218,689	206
Ross and Cromarty	3,474,516	562
Skye and Lochalsh	467,318	626
Sutherland	518,431	307
East Lothian	23,235	2
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,155,278	264
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	1,778,773	152
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dunbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	32,675,646	194
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	562,537	29
Kilmarnock and Boudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	328,169	12
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	804,942	549
Shetland Islands	2,778,672	1,054
Western Isles	2,171,685	881

	1986-87 HSG £	1986-87 HSG per house £
Berwickshire	201,135	78
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	951,730	166
Tweedale	0	0
Clackannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annadale and Eskdale	1,382,490	275
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	253,704	106
Wigtown	0	0
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	558,241	47
Gordon	1,838,802	337
Kincardine and Deeside	779,199	224
Moray	682,537	66
Badenoch and Strathspey	388,218	352
Caithness	663,077	170
Inverness	1,033,853	153
Lochaber	1,441,327	471

	1986-87 HSG £	1986-87 HSG per house £
Nairn	181,633	163
Ross and Cromarty	3,178,298	518
Sky and Lochalsh	586,754	747
Sutherland	522,874	308
East Loathian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argle and Bute	1,373,972	171
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	804,237	70
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	21,891,239	131
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	684,343	463
Shetland Islands	2,934,933	1,129
Western Isles	2,137,164	883

	1987-88 HSG £	1987-88 HSG per house £
Berwickshire	225,306	90
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,115,301	200
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,337,917	270
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	386,158	164
Wigtown	265,382	61
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	617,681	53
Gordon	2,723,337	506
Kincardine and Deeside	1,267,315	364
Moray	982,346	96
Badenoch and Strathspey	462,702	429
Caithness	759,297	197
Inverness	1,157,218	173
Lochaber	1,396,801	458
Nairn	209,500	196
Ross and Cromarty	3,339,315	545

	1987-88 HSG £	1987-88 HSG per house £
Skye and Lochalsh	789,606	1,010
Sutherland	643,801	376
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,709,251	215
Bearsden and Milngavie	51,224	29
Clydebank	786,456	69
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	63,514	47
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	15,116,893	91
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	743,450	513
Shetland Islands	3,172,405	1,225
Western Isles	2,595,347	1,066

	1988-89 HSG £	1988-89 HSG per house £
Berwickshire	91,417	37
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,124,198	208
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,557,353	323
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewarty	413,062	179
Wigtown	410,486	96
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	246,862	22
Gordon	3,276,799	602
Kincardine and Deeside	1,617,844	458
Moray	614,211	61
Badenoch and Strathspey	384,299	367
Caithness	1,012,850	268
Inverness	1,370,584	207
Lochaber	1,800,599	622
Nairn	271,618	257
Ross and Cromarty	3,793,708	624
Skye and Lochalsh	985,932	1,275

	1988-89 HSG £	HSG per house £
Sutherland	796,808	463
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,586,284	202
Bearsden and Milngavie	124,971	73
Clydebank	1,031,201	94
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	33,496	26
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	24,660,513	154
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	850,377	605
Shetland Islands	3,677,667	1,427
Western Isles	2,894,620	1,201

	1989-90 HSG £	HSG per house £
Berwickshire	48,841	21
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,339,141	259
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,684,048	364
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	509,240	230
Wigtown	551,246	132
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	136,883	12
Gordon	3,788,264	689
Kincardine and Deeside	1,922,521	544
Moray	528,935	55
Badenoch and Strathspey	393,499	389
Caithness	1,229,421	328
Inverness	1,949,824	302
Lochaber	2,148,759	789
Nairn	344,628	322
Ross and Cromarty	4,154,244	694
Skye and Lochalsh	1,203,495	1,495
Sutherland	969,864	572
East Lothian	0	0

	1989-90 HSG £	HSG per house £
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,775,900	229
Bearsden and Milngavie	278,995	167
Clydebank	1,010,546	96
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	30,697,621	197
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	776,917	568
Shetland Islands	4,112,702	1,593
Western Isles	3,741,152	1,579

	1990-91 HSG £	HSG per house £
Berwickshire	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,321,472	261
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,504,110	332
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	436,944	198
Wigtown	600,795	148
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	0	0
Gordon	3,792,482	691
Kincardine and Deeside	1,882,382	534
Moray	0	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	386,736	400
Caithness	1,330,831	360
Inverness	1,934,977	310
Lochaber	2,398,530	914
Nairn	350,804	335
Ross and Cromarty	4,231,891	717
Skye and Lochalsh	1,303,836	1,606
Sutherland	1,006,044	588
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0

	1990-91 HSG £	HSG per house £
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,041,664	140
Bearsden and Milngavie	317,125	195
Clydebank	650,646	67
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	24,536,123	165
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney Islands	783,399	588
Shetland Islands	4,395,805	1,729
Western Isles	3,757,098	1,598

Horticulture

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the Scottish Office spent on the promotion of the Scottish horticultural industry in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department has a general sponsoring role in relation to the Scottish horticultural industry. This is discharged in a variety of ways and detailed costs are not held centrally.

The Department funds research and development on horticulture at the Scottish Crop Research Institute, Dundee. Since 1981-92, expenditure has been as follows:

	£'000s
1981-82	1,698
1982-83	1,567
1983-84	1,174
1984-85	1,064
1985-86	918
1986-87	1,104
1987-88	1,080
1988-89	835
1989-90	840
1990-91	1,168
1991-92	855

Hospitality

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by the Scottish Office on hospitality in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is shown in the table:

Year	Amount spent on hospitality £
1979-80	15,283
1980-81	19,427
1981-82	20,762
1982-83	31,588
1983-84	26,287
1984-85	27,301
1985-86	35,815
1986-87	38,315
1987-88	41,983
1988-89	42,987
1989-90	60,173
1990-91	65,123

Rents to Mortgages Scheme

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sales have been completed under the rents to mortgages scheme in Renfrew district; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: By 30 April 1991, 15 sales had been completed under the rent to mortgage scheme within Scottish Homes' Renfrew and Inverclyde district and a further six applications were being processed. Since the extension of the rent to mortgage scheme to local authority tenants from 1 April 1991, some 20,000 expressions of interest have been received from across the country, including over 1,300 from Renfrewshire and Argyll.

Homeless Persons Act

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been considered for priority under the Homeless Persons (Scotland) Act by Renfrew district council in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of households that applied to Renfrew district council under the homeless persons legislation and were assessed as being in priority need are set out in the table. The returns do not record the numbers of persons in these households. Returns for 1990-91 are not yet complete.

Year of application	Number
1980-81	390
1981-82	486
1982-83	612
1983-84	520
1984-85	572
1985-86	979
1986-87	867
1987-88	693
1988-89	800
1989-90	727

Ferguslie Mills

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reach a decision on the application to demolish the category A listed Ferguslie Mills in Paisley; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member has written to my right hon. Friend on this matter. I expect to be in a position to reply to him shortly.

Party Conferences

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the relevant chief constables giving the total policing costs arising from *(a)* the Conservative party conference in Perth and *(b)* the Labour party conference in Aberdeen in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand from the chief constables of the forces concerned that the additional costs involved were £120,000 and £560, respectively. The level of resources provided for the policing of party conferences is an operational matter for the chief constable concerned in the light of all the circumstances including the threat assessment.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount spent by the Registers of Scotland in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the Registers of Scotland in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total amount spent by the Registers of Scotland was £38,234·59 for contracts placed with CCTA system consultancy service of HM Treasury to assess their information systems requirements.

"Registration: Proposals for Change"

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, following the publication of the White Paper "Registration: proposals for change" (Cm. 939), he will consider the introduction of legislation to enable secular marriages to be carried out by magistrates, mayors or provosts, to allow them to take place in civic and other specified buildings and to allow greater flexibility in the services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The White Paper, Cm. 939, presented proposals for change in England and Wales. Scotland's registration system, governed by more recent legislation, already provides considerable flexibility, notably the opportunity for couples to be married in a civil ceremony at any office where there is an authorised registrar, and not just in the area or areas of residence of the parties. The registrar general has invited local authorities to consider how additional flexibility might be provided within the present system, and to submit to him schemes for such improvement. As an example, he has suggested that authorities might wish to designate suitable rooms in other civic buildings as part of registrars' offices, for the purpose of holding civil marriage ceremonies there. My right hon. Friend has no plans for legislation to permit the solemnisation of civil marriages by persons other than registrars.

Students' Allowances

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of any changes in students' allowances for session 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am publishing today the main rates of allowances payable under the postgraduate students' allowances scheme for vocational postgraduate courses which do not attract student loans, together with the rates of various supplementary allowances payable to both undergraduate and vocational postgraduate award holders. The main rates of maintenance allowance for undergraduates will remain frozen at their 1990-91 cash levels following the introduction of student loans.

Details of the new rates have been placed in the Library. The increases in these rates are broadly in line with the 6 per cent. increase in the overall student maintenance provision announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science.

In addition, there are two significant changes to the terms of the students' allowances scheme with effect from session 1991-92. These are:

(i) Eligible students undertaking full-time courses leading to the award of a Higher National Certificate, and certain analogous courses, will be offered assistance under the Scheme; and

(ii) Eligible students who have successfully completed a Higher National Diploma, or any comparable 2-year course, may qualify for assistance from year two of a degree course, irrespective of the subject being studied.

Caledonian MacBrayne

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decisions he has reached on the location of the company headquarters for Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. and the future of the company's services on the upper Clyde.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has accepted the advice of the board of Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. that, on grounds of cost effectiveness, the headquarters of the company should remain in Gourock. He welcomes, however, the company's commitment to Oban, as indicated by the substantial improvements made to shore facilities for passengers and commercial vehicles in recent years.

My right hon. Friend has also decided, in the light of current demand uncertainties, arising particularly from the proposed closure of the Holy Loch naval base, that arrangements for Caledonian MacBrayne's services in the upper Clyde, between Gourock and Dunoon and between Wemyss bay and Rothesay, should continue unchanged meantime. He will ensure, however, that the board of the company, and the Scottish Office, monitor the position closely over the coming months; and he has not ruled out privatisation of these services in the longer term.

Cash Limits

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limits for 1991-92 within his responsibility.

Mr. Lang: Yes, I intend to make changes to six of the cash limits within my responsibility as follows.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 3: Training programmes; roads and transport, and industrial support, Scotland, previously known as training programmes and industrial support, Scotland, will be increased by £161,194,000 from £444,488,000 to

£605,682,000. This increase reflects the transfer of responsibility for roads and transport from the Scottish Office Environment Department to the Scottish Office Industry Department with effect from 29 July 1991, and takes account of increased provision of £13,600,000 for Scottish Enterprise and £1,400,000 for Highlands and Islands Enterprise in respect of Scotland's share of the increased provision for adult training, previously announced by the Secretary of State for Employment on 26 February 1991. There will be a consequent reduction of £146,192,000 in the cash limit for class XV, vote 5, roads, transport and environmental services, Scotland from £279,635,000 to £133,443,000.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 13, law, order, miscellaneous health services and social work services, Scotland, previously known as law, order and miscellaneous health services, Scotland, will be increased by £31,326,000 from £180,438,000 to £211,764,000 to reflect the transfer of provision for social work services from class XV, vote 14, education, arts and libraries and also to cover the transfer of the provision for Scottish prison headquarters staff from class XV, vote 20, Scottish Office administration. This latter transfer will increase the running cost provision on class XV, vote 13 by £2,797,000 from £100,662,000 to £103,459,000.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 14, education, arts and libraries, Scotland, previously known as education, arts, libraries and social work, Scotland, will be reduced by £32,041,000 from £253,004,000 to £220,963,000 to take account of the transfer of responsibility for social work services from the Scottish Office Education Department to the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. A corresponding increase is being sought on class XV, vote 13, law, order and miscellaneous health services, Scotland.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 20 will be decreased by £2,797,000 from £143,239,000 to £140,442,000 to cover the transfer of prison headquarters staff to class XV, vote 13. Accordingly the running cost provision on class XV, vote 20 will be decreased by £2,797,000 from £139,395,000 to £136,598,000.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 26, hospital, community health, family health (part) and other health services, Scotland is being increased by £26,162,000 from £2,306,242,000 to £2,332,404,000 to help meet the costs of pay awards following the 1991 report of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration. This also includes an amount of £3,462,000 as a result of the transfer of provision for training from class XV, vote 13, law, order and miscellaneous health services, Scotland to class XV, vote 26.

There is no change overall to the Department's running costs limit. As already announced the increase in respect of the review bodies' awards and the provision for employment training have been charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. There is no net impact on public expenditure from the other changes shown above.

First Aid

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to assist local education authorities to meet their responsibilities for first aid provision in schools and colleges.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* My Department drew the attention of education authorities in October last year to the revised version of the Health and Safety Commission's approved code of practice which gives practical guidance with respect to the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. In addition my Department is currently preparing guidance on first aid provision in schools and colleges in Scotland which will be issued to education authorities this summer.

Gas and Oil Policies

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money his Department has invested in educational establishments, organisations and individuals for training and retraining in work connected with the gas and oil industry over each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* This information is not collected centrally.

Gas Pipeline

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from local fishermen, marine-ferry operators and local authorities, concerning the laying of a gas pipeline between Rothesay and Dunoon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* None. The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department consulted interested parties, including the local fishermen's association. A licence for the pipeline, required under the provisions of part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, was issued by the Department on 2 May 1991.

Farming Statistics

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers, partners, directors and farm workers were employed on a county-by-county basis in Scotland in June 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Scottish counties ceased to be used for agricultural statistics purposes after 1975 following local government reform. The number of farmers, spouses doing farm work and farm workers employed on main holdings in June 1990, by local authority region, is shown in the table. Partners and directors are not separately enumerated in the census, but are included either as farmers or farm workers.

Region	*Number of farmers*	*Number of spouses doing farm work*	*Number of farm workers*
Borders	1,296	512	2,492
Central	771	379	1,032
Dumfries and Galloway	2,282	1,064	3,846

Region	Number of farmers	Number of spouses doing farm work	Number of farm workers
Fife	722	270	1,704
Grampian	4,643	1,829	5,198
Highland	2,755	1,079	2,103
Lothian	730	309	1,673
Strathclyde	4,101	2,165	5,391
Tayside	2,066	806	3,706
Islands	2,141	982	963
Scotland	21,507	9,[illegible]95	28,108

Trunk Road Schemes

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress on trunk road schemes during 1990-91 and the progress expected in 1991-92.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 24 April, at column *460*.

Road Schemes

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress on road schemes from *(a)* Ballygrant to Bridgend, Islay (A846), *(b)* Salen to Tobermory (A848) and *(c)* Strachur to Leanach (A886).

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* These roads are local roads and, as such, are the responsibility of Strathclyde regional council as the local roads authority.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Information for the period prior to 1 April 1990 is not available. My Department is currently collecting details of energy consumption and costs in 1990-91, and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when the information is complete.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* A part-time energy manager has been appointed and many staff with other duties devote part of their time to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Thirty-five audits were carried out in my Department, excluding the associated Departments and the Scottish prison service, and these led to a large number of recommendations—mainly of a technical nature—designed to improve energy efficiency.

DEFENCE

Job Losses

1. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning job losses in the defence industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others.

The Gulf

11. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what analysis he has made of the effect of air power in winning the war in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The success of the allied air campaign clearly paved the way for the liberation of Kuwait. We are continuing our detailed analysis of the conflict, together with the conclusions to be drawn from it.

"Options for Change"

12. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to report to the House on his consideration of "Options for Change".

Mr. Tom King: We are proceeding in consultation with our NATO allies to carry forward our work on "Options for Change". The achievement of agreement on the United Kingdom role in the rapid reaction corps is an important further step forward in this. As I have already made clear, I intend to set out the progress so far, and the way ahead, in the annual defence White Paper, which I hope to publish before the summer recess.

19. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the role of the Territorial Army as part of his "Options for Change" discussions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have received a number of representations concerning the Territorial Army's role in our future plans for the armed forces.

24. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many meetings have taken place with civil service trade union representatives regarding the "Options for Change" study.

27. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many meetings have taken place with civil service trade union representatives regarding the "Options for Change" study.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Progress on the work on "Options for Change" has been discussed at the last two meetings of the departmental Whitley council and at the last four meetings of the joint industrial Whitley council. In addition, there have been a number of informal meetings between trade union representatives and Ministers and senior officials.

Low Flying

15. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any new radar equipment for use in low-flying training exercises has been set up on the Scottish side of the border in the vicinity of Spadeadam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. A number of mobile ground radar installations are, however, held at RAF Spadeadam and are deployed as necessary during low flying exercises.

Chieftain Tank

17. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further delays he anticipates before the announcement of the replacement for the Chieftain tank.

29. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the outcome of the completion for replacing the Chieftain tank.

Mr. Allan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

Frigates

18. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current number of frigates on order for the Royal Navy and when he expects the next ship of the type 23 class to be brought into service.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are currently seven type 23 frigates on order. The next ship of the class is expected to enter service before the end of the year.

Nuclear Weapons

20. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken to minimise the risk of accidental detonation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The designs of all British nuclear weapons comply with stringent safety standards. Nuclear weapons are afforded the highest practicable procedural and physical safeguards during manufacture, storage and transport.

22. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has of the development of nuclear weapons by countries outside NATO and the former Warsaw pact.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Outside NATO and the Warsaw pact, China is the one declared nuclear weapons state. Argentina, Brazil, India, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa all have significant nuclear facilities not subject to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, as does North Korea which is not recognised as a state by Her Majesty's Government. None of these countries has declared itself to have or to be seeking nuclear weapons. In addition, Iraq was thought to have an active nuclear programme prior to the Gulf conflict. UN Security Council resolution 687 requires that Iraq unconditionally agrees not to acquire or develop nuclear weapons.

Gurkha Regiments

21. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Gurkha regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my right hon. Friend told the House this afternoon, detailed work on the composition of the Army and the future of specific regiments continues. Once the process of consultation within the Army on how to proceed is complete, we shall come forward with more detailed announcements.

NATO

23. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with other Defence Ministers regarding NATO forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett).

Closures, Yorkshire

25. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to close any defence establishments in Yorkshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed measures implementing the changes foreshadowed in the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 25 July 1990 will be announced at the appropriate times.

Indonesia

26. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his counterpart in Indonesia; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has not met General Moerdani, though he hopes to have the opportunity to do so at some stage.

Fighter Aircraft

28. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to meet the German Minister of Defence to discuss the numbers of European fighter aircraft to be ordered by the German air force and the RAF; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with his German colleague at which a wide range of issues are discussed.

Manufacturing Industry

30. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the British defence manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 23 May 1991 *Official Report*, column *613*.

Cash Limits

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he can announce any changes to the defence cash limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Tom King: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary summer supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

Defence cash limits

£'000s

Class and vote	*Current cash limit*	*Change*	*Revised cash limit*
I, 1	10,203,592	+256,740	10,460,332
I, 2	8,680,982	+868,841	9,549,823
I, 3	1,615,717	+4,630	1,620,347
I, 5	487,395	+26,523	513,918

These changes, which increase the block defence cash limit by £1,156,734,000 from £22,875,780,000 to £24,032,514,000, are principally to cover increased expenditure identified so far arising from the United Kingdom military commitment in the Gulf area, and its related effect on other parts of the defence programme. This increase is within the estimate of about £1·5 billion announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 18 April 1991 at column 558. The increase in defence provision for 1991-92 will be charged to the Reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure. This increase will be offset by the cash contributions from other Governments expected to be received in this financial year.

Ceremonial Duties

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the performance of soldiers and horses concerned with ceremonial duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The consistently outstanding performance of both the soldiers and the horses concerned with ceremonial duties is a source of national pride. I look forward to seeing them at the Queen's birthday parade on 15 June.

Gulf Trust Fund

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been collected for the Gulf trust fund; which organisations or individuals have benefited, and by how much; what he intends to do with any remaining or additional money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Donations to the Gulf Trust currently total around £2·5 million. This money is being passed to the service benevolent funds where it will remain earmarked to meet the needs of service personnel and their families which have arisen as a result of death or injury in the Gulf conflict. Individual grants are being made by the benevolent funds in accordance with their trust deeds.

Army Command Structure

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the Army command structure in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I expect to be able to make an announcement shortly on the reorganisation of the United Kingdom land forces district structure and its implications for Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will meet the chairman of the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve for Wales, Maindy barracks, Cardiff to discuss the Army command structure in Wales;

(2) if he will meet the Assembly of Welsh Counties to discuss the Army command structure in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans for such meetings.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has had concerning the Army command structure in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of representations have been made, principally in the form of letters from Members of Parliament and parliamentary questions.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 5 June 1991

EMPLOYMENT

Redundancies

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce further legislation to protect employees made redundant by closure of businesses.

Mr. Forth: Debts owing to employees whose employers have become insolvent may, within certain limits, be paid by my Department. In the case of statutory redundancy pay, the employee may be paid even where there is no formal insolvency. I have no plans at present for further measures.

New Businesses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses have been created in the past five years as a proportion of the number lost; what were the comparable figures for 1974 to 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Between the end of 1984 and the end of 1989, there were an estimated 1,082,000 new registrations for VAT, 29 per cent. greater than the number of deregistrations. Between the end of 1974 and the end of 1979, there were an estimated 809,000 new registrations for VAT, 12 per cent. greater than the number of deregistrations.

TRANSPORT

Articulated Lorries

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will now bring in regulations which forbid the use of articulated lorries built before 1982 which do not have brake variable sensing units fitted on the trailers.

Mr. Chope: We are looking at the feasibility of requiring variable sensing units to be fitted to trailers built before 1982. This will involve balancing the technical and cost implications against the likely benefits.

ENVIRONMENT

Construction Industry

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Government's plans to assist the construction and building industry.

Mr. Yeo: Government policy is to bring inflation under control, to reduce interest rates accordingly and thus to enable the construction industry to take full advantage of market opportunities.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives of the construction industry to discuss the recession.

Mr. Yeo: The Secretary of State and his Ministers are engaged in a continuing round of discussions with representatives of the construction industry.

Pollution Control

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the research conducted on behalf of his Department on the utility of tradeable permits in pollution control.

Mr. Baldry: This research, by the consultants London Economics Ltd., is still continuing.

Kuwait Oil Fires

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has from the World Meteorological Organisation's global atmosphere watch about *(a)* pollution in the global atmosphere as a result of Kuwait oil fires and *(b)* the effects of Kuwait oil fires in (1) western China, (2) the Himalayas and (3) the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Only limited data are available at the World Meteorological Organisation in Geneva from this programme. Very small concentrations of soot particles have been detected in Mauna Loa, Hawaii, but there are no indications of significant atmospheric pollution on a global scale. Information on the specific regions mentioned is not available at present.

CIVIL SERVICE

Chief Executives

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service (1) how many of the 50 executive agency chief executives are Oxbridge graduates;

(2) if he will list each executive agency, the chief executive and the subject of first degree possessed by him or her.

Mr. Renton: This information is not held centrally.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Goodwin Sands

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much aggregate was dredged from the Goodwin sands last year; and what were the comparable figures for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1990 402,084 tonnes of aggregate was dredged from the Goodwin sands. Comparable information from 1980 is as follows:

Year	*Quantity dredged*
1980	Nil
1981	Nil
1982	Nil

Year	Quantity dredged
1983	Nil
1984	599,200
1985	887,856
1986	253,361
1987	Nil
1988	2,716,789
1989	2,432,732
1990	402,084

Inland Revenue (Cash Limit)

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit and running cost limit for 1991-92 for the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Maude: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class XVIII, vote 6 will be reduced by £24,857,000 from £1,568,465,000 to £1,543,608,000. There is no change in the Department's running cost limit. The change in the cash limit arises from an increase in the charges paid by the Department of Social Security to the Inland Revenue in respect of the costs of collecting national insurance contributions.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of the Treasury in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Expenditure on measures to improve energy efficiency are aggregated with maintenance costs and could only be separately identified at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in the Treasury in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Two energy audits have been carried out in the Department in the last five years. The first, in 1987, concentrated on the lighting efficiency of Treasury buildings. Its main recommendations will be taken on board as part of a major rewiring exercise of the building starting in summer 1991. The second is currently being undertaken in the Great George street building, and its findings are not yet available.

DEFENCE

Fishery Protection Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to order fishery protection vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Fishery protection is undertaken by a variety of ships including mine counter-measures vessels and offshore patrol vessels. We have no current plans to order new vessels specifically for this role, although we plan to place further orders for mine counter-measures vessels. The size and timing of orders has yet to be decided.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if public notice of a tender for a fishery protection vessel would need to be inserted in the European Community's *Official Journal*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is no requirement to publish a public notice of a tender in the European Community's *Official Journal* for those Royal Navy vessels which perform fishery protection duties.

Royal Air Force

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) of 17 May, *Official Report*, column 304, what further changes to the Royal Air Force are planned under "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Air Force will shortly be implementing two further measures foreshadowed in the statement by my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on "Options for Change" on 25 July at columns 470-73. First, there will be a small reduction in the number of Nimrod aircraft in service at RAF Kinloss and RAF St. Mawgan, from 1 July 1991. One aircraft will be withdrawn from service at RAF ST. Mawgan, and two from RAF Kinloss.

Secondly, the Buccaneer operational conversion unit at RAF Lossiemouth will start to disband from 1 October 1991, with residual training requirements met by the Buccaneer squadrons themselves. This is the first step in the programme to replace the Buccaneer force at RAF Lossiemouth with Tornado aircraft equipped with Sea Eagle missiles for the anti-surface warfare role. These changes are not expected to result in any redundancies at the three stations.

The Gulf (Women)

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women were deployed to the Gulf; and to which units they were attached.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* At the beginning of March 1991, nearly 1,100 service women were deployed in the Gulf. The ships and units in which they served were:

HMS Battleaxe
HMS Brilliant
HMS Hecla
HMS Herald
RFA Argus
HQ 1st Armoured Division and Signal Regiment
HQ British Forces Middle East
HQ 1st Armoured Brigade
2nd Field Regiment Royal Artillery
40th Field Regiment Royal Artillery
32nd Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery
39th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery
29th Commando Regiment Royal Artillery
12th Air Defence Regiment Royal Artillery
23rd Engineer Regiment
54th Engineer Support and Ambulance Squadron
14th Topographical Squadron Royal Engineers
BFME Postal and Courier Service
1st Coldstream Guards
1st Royal Scots
3rd Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
1st Armoured Division Transport Regiment
4th Armoured Division Transport Regiment
27th Regiment Royal Corps of Transport
1st Armoured Field Ambulance

5th Armoured Field Ambulance
24th Field Ambulance Unit
22nd Field Hospital
32nd Field Hospital
33rd Field Hospital
205th General Hospital
Medical Surgical Team "A"
Medical Surgical Team "B"
3rd Ordnance Battalion Group
6th Ordnance Battalion Group
174th Provost Company
203rd Provost Company
HQ Force Maintenance Area (Gulf)
Field Records
Air HQ Riyadh
RAF Detachment Al Jubayl
RAF Detachment Dhahran
RAF Detachment Khaledap
RAF Detachment Muharraq
RAF Detachment Quayssumah
RAF Detachment Seeb
Muharraq War Hospital

PRIME MINISTER

White Papers (Costs)

Mr. Straw To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the design, preparation, printing and distribution of the White Papers "Education and Training", Cm. 1536, volumes I and II and "Higher Education", Cm. 1541.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of the design and preparation of the White Papers "Education and Training", Cm 1536, volumes I and II, and "Higher Education", Cm 1541, was £51,000. This does not include the costs of printing, publishing and distribution, which are borne by HMSO, and which aims to recover its costs from sales revenue.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the launch at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre of the White Papers, "Education and Training" and "Higher Education", on 20 May, including the cost of the hire of the centre and other charges.

The Prime Minister: The total estimated cost of the launch at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre for the White Papers "Education and Training" and "Higher Education", including the hire of the venue, will not exceed £48,000.

HEALTH

Cardiac Resuscitation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the general district hospitals and trusts that do not have a training officer for cardiac resuscitation employed to train both nurses and doctors on their staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated expenditure in the financial year 1990-91 on management and computer consultancy projects is £13·8 million. A list of consultancy firms and the projects they carried out in 1990-91 has been placed in the Library. None of the projects was carried out for an executive agency.

Mental Health Hospitals

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those mental health hospitals which closed in 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dogs

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have been brought in respect of powerful breeds of dog, including rottweilers, pit-bull terriers, the Tosa and dobermans, in respect of powers or offences under *(a)* section 20 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, in respect of a dog owner's recklessness, *(b)* section 28 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, *(c)* section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871, *(d)* section 1 of the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, *(e)* the Animals Act 1971 and *(f)* the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 since 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The following information relates to offences in 1989, the latest year for which statistics are available, and covers all types of dog.

	Prosecutions	*Convictions*	*Cautions*
Town Police Clauses Act 1847	93	60	71
Dogs Act 1871 and Dangerous Dogs Act 1898	967	166	1,112
Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953	466	395	66

No statistics are available for civil cases concerning dogs brought under the Animals Act 1971, or for offences specifically relating to attacks involving dogs under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

Remand

32. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convicted criminals are known to have committed additional crimes while on remand pending trial in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) how many people remanded on bail are known to have committed offences while so remanded, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that the information requested is not available. However, Home Office

statistical bulletin 30/90, "Reasons for refusing unconditional bail, January to February 1989", estimates that 19 per cent. of those remanded in custody had previously reoffended on bail. A copy of this bulletin is in the Library.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent attempt by French demonstrators to enter England through the channel tunnel; what measures were taken to resist this incursion; and what measures are to be taken to restrict access to the channel tunnel to authorised persons only.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On the night of 16 May, an organised group of men gained unauthorised access to the channel tunnel in an apparent attempt to walk to the United Kingdom. They turned back at the ventilation fan station, where the way had been blocked by TML, the construction contractors. They used no violence and caused no damage. On leaving the tunnel at the French end, they were interviewed by French police but not detained. The French and United Kingdom authorities were in close contact throughout the incident.

The access control arrangements for the United Kingdom and French terminals have been approved by the channel tunnel intergovernmental commission as appropriate to the tunnel's current status as a private construction site. All security arrangements relating to the tunnel are subject to the approval of the United Kingdom and French Governments and are kept under review.

Crime Statistics

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list statistics for each year from 1980 to 1990 showing; *(a)* the number of persons aged 18 to 25 years convicted of theft, *(b)* the number of persons aged 16 to 17 years convicted of theft, *(c)* the number of persons aged 18 to 25 years convicted of soliciting, *(d)* the number of persons aged 16 to 17 years convicted of soliciting, *(e)* the number of persons aged 18 to 25 years convicted of begging and *(f)* the number of persons aged 16 to 17 years convicted of begging.

Mr. John Patten: Information for the years 1980, 1983, 1986 and 1989 is given in the following table. To produce further information for the other years requested would involve disproportionate cost.

Number of persons convicted of theft, soliciting and begging by age group for the years 1980, 1983, 1986 and 1989 England and Wales

Age groups	*1980*	*1983*	*1986*	*1989*
Theft				
16–17	30,266	27,721	22,609	11,888
18–25	70,165	73,411	66,648	49,496
Soliciting				
16–17	18	3	11	15
18–25	242	164	152	122
Begging				
16–17	10	25	2	60
18-20[1]	32	43	38	214

[1] For the summary offence of begging it is not required to record the age of the offender if over the age of 21.

Dogs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* pit bull terriers and *(b)* rottweilers in Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: Estimates have been given to us that there are up to 10,000 pit bull terriers and about 100,000 rottweilers in Great Britain. We have no estimates for Wales.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Lords Amendments

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to conduct the trial to cover the proposals in the second report of the Procedure Committee for Session 1990-91 to deal with the documents required for Commons consideration of amendments from the Lords to Bills when they are considered by the House.

Mr. MacGregor: Following the successful completion of a non-operational trial by the Public Bill Office, I intend to initiate an operational trial using the Criminal Justice Bill when it returns from the Lords. The arrangements involve the production of a conflated paper containing Lords amendments and Commons notices on white paper on the day of consideration within the criteria and cut-off time set out in paragraphs 26 and 28 to 32 of the report. I hope that all Members will co-operate in this trial and that they will pass their comments to the Public Bill Office, so that a full assessment of the trial may be made.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, for each research council, for the latest available year *(a)* the amount of money allocated to each research council and spent in Wales and *(b)* the proportion of public money allocated to each research council that was spent in Wales.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In 1990-91, the research council's expenditure in Wales from the science budget and the proportion as a percentage of the total were as follows:

	Expenditure in Wales derived from the science budget (£ million)	*Percentage of science budget to council*
AFRC	2·6	2·9
ESRC	0·6	1·6
MRC[1]	1·1	0·6
NERC	10·9	8·1
SERC	6·7	1·5

[1] 1989-90 figures.

Details of research council expenditure in Wales from all sources of public money are not available.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has given any indication to the Advisory Board for the Research Councils of his view of the future and the future use of its flexibility margin.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend announced to the House on 22 May 1991 at column 500 his acceptance of the ABRC's advice on the allocation of the flexibility margin.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any representations on the ethical standards of the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations about the review by the Science and Engineering Research Council of its forward programme. I am not aware of any which refer to the council's ethical standards.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he plans to review the future of the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to review the future of the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Student Loans

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to lay before the House the new student loans regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1991 were laid today to come into force on 1 August. They are modelled closely on the current regulations. They employ the new loan rates announced on 22 May at columns 499-500 and include improvements introduced in the light of experience over the past year. The regulations will ensure that the scheme continues to operate efficiently and to the advantage of all borrowers.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the individual appointments excluding casual vacancies he is scheduled to make to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992, indicating in each case the title of the post, the salary if any and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to the reply, 7 May 1991, column 392-396]:* Contrary to the information given in my earlier answer, the chairman of the National Council for Educational Technology is unpaid. Eight, rather than nine, new appointments were made in 1991.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Strategy

6. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's industrial strategy.

Mr. Lilley: I gave a comprehensive statement of the Government's industrial policy in my speech to the Institute of Directors in Birmingham on 30 April. A copy of the speech has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Cammell Laird

17. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken or plans to take to avert the closure of Cammell Laird shipyard.

Mr. Leigh: The future of Cammell Laird is a matter for the commercial judgment of VSEL, its parent company. It is actively seeking a buyer for the yard and the Government will continue to do all they can to assist VSEL's efforts.

GATT

18. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations.

Mr. Lilley: A successful conclusion to the GATT Uruguay round negotiations remains a top priority for the United Kingdom. Now that the United States Administration has obtained an extension of its fast-track negotiating mandate, we hope that all parties will redouble their efforts to bring the talks to a successful conclusion no later than the end of the year.

Recession

19. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the north-west regional Confederation of British Industry to discuss the recession in industry.

Mr. Lilley: I have no present plans to meet representatives of the NW regional CBI, although my officials do so regularly. I met the presidential committee of the CBI on 24 April and the CBI's national president on 15 May.

23. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received from British industry about the recession.

Mr. Lilley: I continue to receive representations from British industry supporting the Government's determination to defeat inflation, thereby creating the conditions for a resumption of sustainable economic growth.

Privatisation

20. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals to privatise further industries.

Mr. Redwood: Bills before Parliament will enable privatisation of the British Technology Group and the Insurance Services business of the ECGD. I intend to privatise the National Engineering Laboratory, but have set no timetable.

25. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the number of companies that have been returned to the private sector since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The privatisations undertaken by my Department were listed in the answer I gave to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 20 December 1990 at column 340.

Car Industry

21. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on prospects for the car industry.

Mr. Leigh: The current success in export markets has enabled the United Kingdom car industry to maintain production despite the downturn in the domestic market. Medium and long-term prospects for the United Kingdom car industry are excellent, with annual production likely to reach 2 million units by the mid to late 1990s.

24. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the increase in British car production that is expected to follow the investments being made in this country by Japanese car companies.

Mr. Leigh: The investment projects currently being undertaken in the United Kingdom by Nissan, Toyota and Honda will bring at least 500,000 units of new production capacity to the United Kingdom by the mid to late 1990s.

Trading Standards

22. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Local Authorities Committee on Trading Standards to discuss consumer contracts.

Mr. Leigh: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have current plans to meet with the Local Authorities Committee on Trading Standards.

26. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Local Authorities Committee on Trading Standards to discuss product safety.

Mr. Leigh: I have met trading standards officers and members of their representative organisations on several occasions at which product safety was one of the issues discussed. Also, officials of my Department have regular contact with the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards Officers to discuss product safety.

32. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Local Authorities Committee on Trading Standards to discuss product safety.

Mr. Leigh: I have met trading standards officers and members of their representative organisations on several occasions at which product safety was one of the issues discussed. Also, officials of my Department have regular contact with the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards and individual trading standards officers to discuss product safety.

Inward Investment

27. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the level of inward investment into Cumbria.

Mr. Leigh: In recent years, the main source of inward investment into Cumbria has been through developments by existing companies in the area. However, in conjunction with INWARD, the North West regional development organisation, we are working closely with local agencies to ensure that Cumbria's attractions are presented effectively to new potential inward investors.

28. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Britain's recent record in attracting inward investment from the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Leigh: According to the Federal Ministry of Economics in Bonn, German direct investment in the United Kingdom at the end of 1989 totalled DM 16·5 billion, an increase of 320 per cent. since 1983. Despite growing international competition, particularly from the former GDR, outward investment figures for the first six months of last year published by the Institut de deutschen Wirtschaft indicate that 1990 will be a record year for the United Kingdom in attracting investment from Germany.

Square D

29. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the takeover of Square D by the French firm Schneider.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's main consideration in deciding whether or not to refer a merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation remains its effect on competition as it affects the United Kingdom consumer. In addition, as my right hon. Friend announced on 26 July 1990, in deciding whether to make such a reference he will in future pay particularly close attention to the degree of state control, if any, of the acquiring company. It would not be appropriate to comment further on the acquisition by Schneider SA of the Square D company in advance of my right hon. Friend's announcement of his decision on whether to refer this merger to the Commission or not. My right hon. Friend will take all relevant considerations into account when reaching his decision.

Aerospace

30. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had with the major companies in the aerospace industry about current problems facing the industry.

Mr. Leigh: The Secretary of State met British Aerospace in December and Rolls-Royce in March.

Manufacturing Output

31. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to boost manufacturing output.

Mr. Sainsbury: Manufacturing output will be helped by our policies of fostering and extending the competitive environment, encouraging innovation and controlling inflation.

Parcels Service

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the privatisation of Royal Mail Parcels and Operation Danill.

Mr. Leigh: We have no present plans to privatise Royal Mail Parcelforce.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. Leigh: My Department's expenditure on consultants engaged in the financial year 1990-91 is estimated to be £5,576,000 of which £3,492,000 is for consultancy contracts excluding hardware and software purchases. These figures do not include expenditure by DTI executive agencies, information on which is not held centrally. The chief executives of the agencies have been asked to reply direct to the hon. Gentleman with the relevant information. Copies of their answers will be placed in the House of Commons Library. The following lists the management or computer consultancy contracts awarded for the financial year 1990-91:

Firm	*Subject of Assignment*
A T and T Istel Ltd	Inside UK Enterprise
Derwent Business Systems	Aircraft engines emissions study
General technology systems limited	Support to BNSC
Communications Studies and Planning Limited	BNSC directory of UK space capabilities '91
Business Briefings Limited	Electronic component seminar
Touche Ross	Support DTI in international environmental negotiations study
PA Consulting Group	Study of washing machines: Drafting spec for ECO labelling
Children's Research Unit	Children and Fireworks research
Association for Consumer Research	Survey on trader awareness of misleading prices regime
CIMTECH	Companies House imaging project
Price Waterhouse	Development of Companies House's commercial accounting systems
NERA	Enquiry into standards of cross media promotion
Coopers and Lybrand Deloittes	Local Government regulation of business
Coopers and Lybrand Deloittes	Revision of managing into the 90s newsletter
Text Matters	Managing into the 90s: Recasting of purchasing and supply booklets
PA Consulting	Successful Purchaser/Suppliers relationships studies portfolio
Segal Quince Wickstead	Integrated graduate degree pilot study
BHRA	New approach study collaborative technology
ACWI	Woodworking machinery manufacturing industry
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Financial viability of the management charter initiative
Peat Marwick McLintock	Engineering and technology programme pilot study
Eadie Baxter	Evaluation of DTI support on aeroengine noise reduction research
Grant Thornton	Evaluation of outward mission and overseas seminar scheme
Segal Quince and Wickstead	Single market campaign: interim evaluation
Oxford Economic Forecasting	Estimating import equations for the IMS model
Oxford Economic Research Associates Limited	Sub-contracting study
Segal Quince Wickstead	Regional enterprise grants evaluation
St. John's Innovation Centre Ltd.	Managing into the 90s programme evaluation
Aspects International	Waste prevention demonstration chart
London Business School	Large trade publication consultancy study
Tillinghast	Implementation of business review and information
Ernst and Young	Training needs analysis for insurance division
P-E International	Consultant for data communications network audit
Dataquest Europe Limited	Electronics components—market structure
Ernst and Young	Electronics components purchasing policies
Ernst and Young	Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association
Alan Fox Project Development	Consultancy support to local organisations (St. Mary's)
Alan Fox Project Development	Consultancy support to local organisations (Weavers)
Alan Fox Project Development	Consultancy support to local organisations (Oxford House)
Compass Partnership	Consultancy support to local organisations (St. Hilda's)
Compass Partnership	Consultancy support to local organisations (Byl)
MBM Consulting	Consultancy support to local organisations (Language Line)
Community Economy	Consultancy support to local organisations (Bridge Project)
Community Economy	Consultancy support to local organisations (East London Small Business Centre)
D. Howard Green and Associates	Task force supply of business development finance study
Manchester Polytechnic Centre for Employment Research	Skill and labour market survey
Ernst and Young	Business director for Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association
Ernst and Young	Investment in the UK market survey 1990-91
Coopers and Lybrand Deloittes	Research into knock-on effects of inward investment
Peat Marwick McLintock	Monitoring Cornish tin mines carnon
Peat Marwick McLintock	English unit—future watch
Pieda	England fact file
KMPG Peat Marwick McLintock	Perception of England
Graham Bannock and Partners	Small firms affected by the single market
Price Waterhouse	Introduction of a quality system to meet BS5750
IFS (Conferences) Ltd.	Inside United Kingdom enterprise
Welding Institute	Eureka awareness in adhesives field
Hay Management Consultants	Communications audit within the insolvency service
Coopers and Lybrand Deloittee	Efficiency/effectiveness of proposed accounting systems
Tillinghast	Insurance division IT strategy study

National Computing Centre (NCC)	Key international OSI standards
Data Dictionary Systems Limited	International standards for data dictionaries
J. Westgate (Consultants) Limited	Development of management standards
SEMA Group UK Limited	OSI upper layer standards development
Chris Makemson Consultants Limited	Development of virtual terminal standards
SEMA Group plc	OSI management standards development
T. William Associates Limited	Reference model of data management
Medical Technology Consultants Europe Limited	United Kingdom testing and certification requirements for medical devices
PSC International Limited	Production of practical and technical guides
Security and Standards Consultancy Limited	EDI messaging security standards
STC Technology	20th European solid state research—ESSDERC '90
P-Four Consultancy Ltd.	Open systems technology transfer module (OSTT)
Architecture Projects Management (APM) Ltd	ODP workshops and publications
British Informatics Society Ltd	Tickit recommendations: Advice and assistance
Eosys Ltd	OSI Implementor group secretariat work
National Computing Centre	Appraisal and monitoring of eureka project
National Computing Centre	Open systems standards development and support programmes
I William Olle Associates	Administration of data base standards
Technology Appraisals Ltd	Open systems wall chart: Production and distribution
Technology Appraisals Ltd	Production of OSI products
SD-Scicon UK Limited	Expert systems case studies and guidelines programme
Reynolds and Johnson Limited	OSTT case studies/case analyses
Mackintosh Generics Limited	Eureka feasibility study on flat panel displays
Michael Shortland Associates	Microelectronic devices: Major markets and products
KPMG Peat Marwick Mclintock	Open distributed processing
BIS Mackintosh Limited	Customised version of European GAAS capability study
Michael Shortland Associates	HCI awareness programme: Programme launch
Systems Concepts	HCI programme: Reference booklets standards
Design Council	HCI programme: Reference booklets—consultants
R M Consulting	HCI programme: Writing of reference booklets—tools
Logica Space and Defence Systems Limited	Evaluation training course at NPL
DNA Consultancy Services	Advanced sensors technology programme evaluation
Rutherford Appleton laboratory	High performance interfaces/ protocols
P-Four	HCI programme: Case studies
KPMG Peat Marwick Mclintock	Developing brochure material
Logica Limited	Eureka collaborative R and D meeting: Paris
SEMA Group Systems Limited	Network support for industrial researchers
AEA Industrial Technology	Network management standards development
Touche Ross	Speech and natural language consultancy
BIS Mackintosh Limited	The technical and commer companies
Michael Shortland Associates	HCI awareness programme: All flyer and information pack
ADA Language UK Limited	Contribution to ADA conference '90
St. John's Innovation Centre	OSTT: Monitoring and evaluation
Grant Thornton	Working out a computer strategy
Eosys Limited	OSI Implementor groups secretariat
British Telecom	Assessment of AERE standards work for OSI management
Reigate manual writers	Eureka project EU130 consultancy study
Salford Software Services	OSI directory services
Dataquest Europe Limited	Publication of the Electronics components study
Dataquest Europe Limited	Analyses of the electronic components database
Tallis Consultancy	Telecommunications study
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Internal scrutiny of FBP: Survey of chambers of commerce trade association etc.
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Information system strategy study for ITD
Metron Technology	Plexus (X2S/Oslan) training/ evaluation
BIS Applied Systems	Regional offices information strategy study
Julia Schofield Consultants Limited	Evaluation of voice activated technology
Electronic Facilities Design	Regional offices information systems strategy study
Computer Sciences Company	SAMIS requirement review
BIS Applied Systems	Office systems strategy study
EOSYS Limited	Network consultancy for Kingsgate House
Task Force Pro Libra	Classification of revised skills and services
Quo-Tec Limited	Materials Technology in the United Kingdom (Eureka promotion)
Welding Institute	Surface engineering United Kingdom/Finland
Intelligent Applications Limited	Advance tech/support of maintenance for machine tools
P-E International	Information systems strategy study for manufacturing technology (MT) division
W S Atkins	Eureka: Energy efficiency in electrical machines
Quo-Tec Ltd.	Link programme: high temperature-high performance materials
Quatex-consultancy	UK participants of a Eureka Anglo-Spanish event
ISVR Consultancy Services	Study on new EC noise directives
British Textile Technology Group	Critique of garment colouration study
BMT Defence Services Limited	Christchurch Bay tower maintenance
Advanced Robotics Research Limited	Advanced robotics safety seminar
Optimat Limited	Materials technology audit in Scotland
Douglas Westwood Associates	DTI-Department of Energy study: R and D in subsea electronics
PERA	Overseas practice in the co-ordination of advanced manufacturing technology
IT Focus	Monograph on the export CIM-OSA
Metra Martech Limited	New products study MT division
Association of Chamber of Commerce	Study on setting up Chambernet

Leeds University Industrial Services Ltd.	Manufacturing message service users guide
P-E International	Manufacturing intelligence programme information
Strategic Projects Group	SPG matrix modelling process to UK textile machinery
Manchester University Prest	Microwave aspects of new NMS programme for electrical science
Scientific Generics Limited	Study the validity of analytical measurement
PERA	AMT implementations study
La Creative	Literature and panels for ceramic industry seminar
Promotor International	Cermaics industry seminar telecheck mailing
Promotor International	Ceramics industry seminar planning/operation
AT and T Istel Industry Systems	Market assessment on open systems in manufacturing
Crown Business Communications	Strategy roadshow launch
Meeting Deadlines Limited	Improving the maintenance of machine tools
ERA Technology	Materials opportunity review
Robert Keown Associates	Surface engineering in manufacturing industry
BMT Defence Services Limited	Christchurch Bay Tower disposal
ERA Technology	Traceable calibrations—electromagnetic compatability directive
Scientific Generics Limited	The NMS for length
Segal Quince Wicksteed Limited	Performance of north west manufacturing industry
City and Corporate Counsel Limited	Opportunity Japan Campaign: Phase 3 survey
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Overseas trade information systems study (OTISS)
Palmlave Limited	Provide training in the use of botis systems and export data branch
Commercial Transfer Limited	Removal of patent office stationery store to Wales
Almondhall	IT project planner
Business Focus	Market analysis survey—pats
Price Waterhouse	Accountancy consultancy for the patent office
Transmark Worldwide	Solid state interlocking railway signalling system study
Ralph H. Pickering Associates	Supplement skill resources of PEP4C
Seagull Safety Limited	Market targetting consultancy
Glyced Project Management Limited	Hong Kong port/airport development scheme (PADS)
W S Atkins International	Land reclamation feasibility study—Moscow
Industrial Training Services Limited	Training and development review within DTI
Industrial Training Services Limited	Review of training at NEL
Industrial Training Services Limited	Competent approach to performance
Northern Race Training Unit	Equal opportunities training
British Telecom International	Marine radio equipment
Logica	Satcos ADP software maintenance
Smith Associates Limited	Modelling of very large antennas phase 1
Radio Frequency Investigation Limited	IDMA transmission structures interfering potential
Roke Manor Research	Mobile system evaluation development project
British Aerospace (Space Systems)	Satellite HDTV at 25 GHZ study
Satconsult Limited	Satellite on board processing study
Regis Systems Limited	Slightly inclined GEO stationary orbits (SIGO)
Microwave and Antenna Systems	Harmonic performance of citizen's band antennas
Satconsult Limited	Spectral efficency of code division multiple access techniques
Regis Systems Limited	Very small aperture antennas Phase II study
Regis Systems Limited	Inter-satellite links study
PA Consulting Group	Visiting engineers scheme
Water Research Centre	Environment innovation programme
Institute of Manpower Studies	Career patterns and progress of former teaching company associates
Segal Quince Wicksteed	Link review and analysis of procedures
Leadenhall Associates	EUREKA—Famos workshops in Portugal and Norway
Robert Keown Associates	Surface engineering assignment
Manchester University Prest	Advertisements as indicators
David Rigby Associates	Garment colouration and consumer choice
Intermatrix Limited	Signposting Japanese technology
Knowledge Research	DTI working party on the film industry
National Computing Centre Limited	Fintech consultancy 25 June 1990

Fair Trading

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in any future restatement of his Department's objectives, he will include a statement of his policy to work for fair trading conditions world wide and for strengthened General Agreement on Tarriffs and Trade rules and disciplines, as well as for trade liberalisation.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently published revised departmental objectives. These include the objective of working for trade liberalisation worldwide. The Government's top priority in this field at present is the early successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay round of trade negotiations. This will produce a strengthened framework of rules and disciplines for international trade and fairer and more open trading conditions for all participants.

Textiles

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations have been received from the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries about subsidies by the French Government to the VEV group of textile companies; and if he will press the European Commission to investigate subsidies of French textile companies.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have received representations about these alleged subsidies from representatives of the industry. The European Commission has been made aware of the United Kingdom's interest in seeing this matter properly investigated.

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the textile and clothing industry to discuss the effect of the recession.

Mr. Leigh: I have no present plans to do so.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to improve the

speed of action possible by trading standards officers in banning the sale of imported children's clothing which proves on testing to be a fire hazard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Trading standards officers already have powers under section 14 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 to issue suspension notices immediately prohibiting for up to six months the supply of goods where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that they contravene any safety provision.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current status of the multi-fibre arrangement, the Government's position on it, and other measures that the Government are taking to protect the British textiles industry from unfair competition.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on 4 June at column 170. The question of unfair competition is being addressed in the substantive textiles negotiations.

Debt Collecting Agencies

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what obligations debt collecting agencies are under to ensure that the information upon which they act is accurate and true; and what responsibilities are held by companies employing debt collecting agencies on their behalf.

Mr. Leigh: Debt collecting is a licenseable activity under the Consumer Credit Act 1974. The licensing system is administered by the Director General of Fair Trading and he has the power to refuse or revoke a licence if he believes that a business is not fit to engage in the activities covered by the licence. In reaching his decision, he will take account of any business practices which appear to him to be deceitful or oppressive or otherwise unfair or improper, whether unlawful or not. I will ask the director general to write to the hon. Member.

EC Funding (Cleveland)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which projects involving European Community funding in the Cleveland county area since 1987 have involved additionality costs to the United Kingdom Exchequer.

Mr. Leigh: In setting the Government's public expenditure programmes, account is taken of expected receipts from the European Community. This enables the programmes to be larger than they otherwise would be.

London Underground Ltd.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on London Underground Ltd. will be published.

Mr. Lilley: The report is published today. The Commission were asked to conduct a wide ranging inquiry into the efficiency and costs of and the service provided by London Underground Ltd. The Commission recognises that there are serious constraints on the ability of London Underground to improve efficiency and quality of service. The underground is an old system, which suffers from many years of neglect of its basic infrastructure. The Commission gives due credit to London Underground management for achievements in many areas, notably in the field of safety. However, they conclude that the efficiency with which London Underground uses its present resources still leaves much to be desired.

The report concludes that there is significant scope for improving efficiency and reducing costs, without affecting safety or service standards. The Commission recognises the need for LUL to have a stable investment programme funded partly by the Government and partly by improvements in efficiency but also takes the view that there will have to be an enhanced contribution from real increases in fares. They recognise there has been substantial investment in recent years.

Reflecting the breadth of the inquiry, the Commission has made over 100 recommendations aimed at assisting LUL to improve its performance, giving particular priority collectively to six matters: control of cash against the external financing limit set by the Government management information systems; utilisation of manpower; fares policy and levels; management of investment programme and projects; and renewal and maintenance of the network. In these and other areas, the Commission has set target dates for the implementation of their recommendations.

LUL will be producing a preliminary response to the Commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make a statement.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Thirty-one members of staff are designated energy managers as part of their duties. The Department devoted approximately four man years to energy mangement in 1990-91.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Until recently, responsibility for such investment has been divided between the Property Services Agency and the Department, with the result that this information for past years could only be assembled at disproportionate cost. In 1989-90, £236,000 (£221,000 in 1990-91 terms) was spent on the installation and replacement of equipment and fabric in projects which had a significant energy saving content in their specification. Figures have not yet been fully compiled for 1990-91 but will be rather higher.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the

figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I am sorry that information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* One full energy audit has recently been carried out which indicated potential saving of over £20,000 a year for a capital outlay of £45,000. Measures are in hand to implement the recommendations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the Christmas bonus payable to senior citizens in 1972 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* at 1991 prices.

Miss Widdecombe: The Christmas bonus payable to senior citizens in 1972 in cash terms was £10, and which at April 1991 prices would be worth £59·17. The cost at this rate would be about £700 million.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the total staff of the Contributions Agency are on secondment from Government Departments.

Mr. Jack: The Contributions Agency, along with other DSS executive agencies, is a part of the DSS. Accordingly it is staffed by departmental civil servants.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Miss Widdecombe: The total expenditure on management and computer consultancy contracts in the financial year 1990-91, excluding software and hardware purchases, is £69·75 million.

Details of the individual contracts awarded in the 1990-91 financial year are given in the table.

Consultancy firm	*Subject and agency*
Addenbrookes hospital, Cambridge	HQ Relocation
Admiral Management Services Ltd.	Quality Management System Pilot Project—Agency ITSA
ACE Datasystems Ltd.	Staff Suggestions Unit Consultancy
Andersen Consulting	Employment Services—Agency ITSA
Andersen Consulting	Common Benefit Architecture—Agency ITSA
Andersen Consulting	Training Project—Agency ITSA
Andersen Consulting	Contributions Unit Development
Anita Ram	Selected International Comparisons of Household Incomes
Applied Systems Engineering	Single Terminal Access Project Productisation—Agency ITSA
Applied Systems Engineering	Virtual Machine Environment—Auditor Production Development—Agency ITSA
Arthur D. Allwright Associates	Purchasing Consultancy
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Communicating the Operational Strategy (Phase I)
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Communicating the Operational Strategy (Phase II)
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Code and Instruction Review
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Social Fund Communications
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Communication Project for Benefits Agency (BAMT)
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Communication Skills Course for Service Development Teams
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Working With Small Groups Workshop Project
Baddeley Associates Ltd.	Headquarters Review Team—Consultancy Support
Ben Williams Consultants	Customer Service Training—Agency ITSA
Cavendish Tricorne	Local Factors Model
Cavendish Tricorne	Local Pay Additions
Cavendish Tricorne	Performance Related Pay
Cavendish Tricorne	Overbearing Model
Cavendish Tricorne	Integrated Pay and Personnel Project
Cavendish Tricorne	War Pensions
Cavendish Tricorne	Contributions Unit Development (Human Resource Planning)
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	Departmental Information Systems Strategy Scoping Study
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	Financial Information Strategy Project (Annual Review)
Childcare	Childcare Arrangements at DSS Longbenton
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Agencies Systems Planning
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Training Seminar for Leaders
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Creation of the Purchasing and Supply Manual
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Procurement Management Information System
Computer Sciences Company Ltd.	ITSA Security Training—Agency ITSA
Computer Sciences Company Ltd.	ITSA Security—Developments Systems and Infrastructure Projects—Agency ITSA
Computer Sciences Company Ltd.	Security Standards Software Support—Agency ITSA
Computer Sciences Company Ltd.	Support for Single Terminal Access Project
Computer Sciences Company Ltd.	Terminal Management System Development—Agency ITSA
Comshare Limited	Executive Information System—Software Support
Crantex Limited	Emergency Support for Infrastructure Support and Design Group—Agency ITSA
Crantex Limited	Health Service On-Line Project—Agency ITSA

Dameimage Limited	Analytical Services Statistical Information System (Assist) Project Audit
Dameimage Limited	Assist Project—User Assurance Co-ordinator
Dameimage Limited	Assist Project—Technical Assurance Co-ordinator
Daniel Doherty Associates	Gender discrimination project
David Sheppard and Associates	Contributions unit agency launch project
DEGW Limited	Space standards consultancy
DPS Consultancy Limited	Retirement counselling courses
Dun and Bradstreet Software Services	Introduction of accountancy framework system—Agency ITSA
Dun and Bradstreet International	Purchasing consultancy
Easams Limited	Delivery of system to receipt, record and account for valuables—Agency ITSA
Easams Limited	Support for strategy operations architecture project
Electronic Data Systems Ltd.	Writing procedures for project control services—Agency ITSA
Enator	Integrated complementing system
Enator	Integrated monitoring system
Enator	Performance integrated monitoring for managers system
Enator	OPSTRAT implementation
Equalities Associates	Equal opportunities seminars (Central)
Equalities Associates	Equal opportunities seminars (Midlands region)
Ernst and Young	Integrated complementing system
Ernst and Young	Integrated complementing system—further work
Ernst and Young	Integrated complementing system development
Ernst and Young	Departmental information systems strategy scoping study (headquarters units)
Ernst and Young	Departmental information systems strategy impact analysis
Ernst and Young	Self investment by pensions schemes
Facilita Software Development Limited	Integrated terminal test system —Agency ITSA
Furniture Industry Research Association	Purchasing consultancy (furniture research)
Hadley Hunter	Overpayments Recovery
Hadley Hunter	Lone Parent Support
Handley Walker	Post Office Counters—Fee Negotiations
Handley Walker	Purchasing of Welfare Milk
Hoskyns Group Plc	Child Support Agency—Project Managers—Agency ITSA Workbench
Hoskyns Group Plc	Contingency Planning—Agency ITSA
Hoskyns Group Plc	Integrated Personnel and Payroll Project—Agency ITSA
Hoskyns Group Plc	Viability of the Mailsort System —Agency ITSA
HMG Consulting Limited	Departmental Management Board Reporting System
HMG Consulting Limited	Executive Information Systems —Agency ITSA
Industrial Motivations Ltd	Make a Difference Campaign
I-Net Communications Limited	Review of Strategy Data Communications—Agency ITSA Network
International Computers Limited (UK)	Adjudication Support Prototype —Agency ITSA
INLI—Institute for a New Leadership Initiative	Equal Opportunities Training Development
Institute of Manpower Studies	Manpower Planning Workshop
Institute of Manpower Studies	Manpower Planning Project
Kentec Mailing Consultants	Mailing Consultancy
Level-7 Limited	Naming and Addressing Requirements for—Agency ITSA the Single Terminal Access Project
Level-7 Limited	X-400 Project—Agency ITSA
Lloyd Northover	Corporate Image for DSS Property
Logica UK Ltd	Integrated Monitoring System
Logica UK Ltd	Integrated Monitoring System (For Integrated Complementing System)
London Economics	Self Investment by Pensions Schemes
Mass Observation	Relocation Assessment
Market and Opinion Research International	HQ Relocation Project
Meena Goyal	Housing and Community Charge Benefits Project Work
MFT Computers Systems Ltd.	Business Unit Information Centre Project—Agency ITSA
Mr. J. M. Bankier	Study on Whole Person Concept
Mr. G. Beaven	Non-Executive Director of Management Board
Mr. M. Lee	Principles of Pension Trusteeship
Mr. J. Mesher	Statement on the Principles of Trusteeship
Mr. N. Parry	HQ Relocation Project
Mr. M. Tyler	Integrated Complementing System
Nationwide Anglia Relocation	Headquarters Relocation Projects Relocation Presentation at OCAO
Neville R. H. Way, Procurement and Supply Consultant	Review of the Purchasing and Supply Manual and Training Needs Analysis
PA Consulting Group	Rewards Strategy—Agency ITSA
PA Consulting Group	Feasibility Study into the Computer System for the Proposed Child Support Agency—Agency ITSA
PA Consulting Group	Child Support Agency—Planning Support to User Teams—Agency ITSA
PA Consulting Group	Review and Development of Standards in ITSA Security —Agency ITSA
PA Consulting Group	Enhancement of the MMD—BMD Database (Nottingham Staff Resource Unit)
PA Consulting Group	Management Reviews
PA Consulting Group	Review of the DSS Central Office Management
Pathfinder	Develop and Assist in the Implementation of IT Security in the Departmental Network Systems—Agency ITSA
Pathfinder	ITSA Security—PC Security Audit—Agency ITSA

P-E Inbucon	Survey of Local Authorities—Follow up to the Community Charge Benefit Monitoring Exercise
Peat Marwick McLintock	Contributions Unit Development (Customer Survey—Employers)
Peat Marwick McLintock	Counselling for Staff Leaving under the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (Outplacement Scheme)
Peat Marwick McLintock	Head of Training for the Benefits Agency (Selection and Recruitment)
Peat Marwick McLintock	Debt Recovery Monitoring System
Perspective Technica	Quality Management Systems—Agency ITSA
Peter Hyde Management and Training Consultant	Benefits Agency Planning Seminar
Porter Gittins Limited	Child Care Project for DSS in Coventry
Praxis Systems Plc	Integrated Terminal Test System Support and Maintenance—Agency ITSA
Price Waterhouse	Administrative Resource Management System (Unit Costs and Budgeting)
Price Waterhouse	Integrated Complementing System (Development)
Price Waterhouse	Contributions Unit Development (Human Resources Personnel Strategy Project)
Price Waterhouse	Research into Costs in Residential Care and Nursing Homes
Price Waterhouse	Selection of Recruitment of Benefit Agency Finance Director
Price Waterhouse	Departmental Management Board Reporting System
Price Waterhouse	Executive Information System Feasibility Study
Price Waterhouse	Public Expenditure Survey Forecasting—Agency ITSA
Price Waterhouse	Review of Manpower Forecasting System—Agency ITSA
Professor Steven Haberman	Self Investment by Pensions Schemes
Property Holdings	HQ Relocation Project
Protocol International	Customer Services Section User Liaison—Agency ITSA
Public Arts	HQ Relocation Project
Purchasing Index (UK) Ltd	Purchasing Consultancy
Research Support and Marketing	Contract Data Preparation
Robin Verney Associates Ltd	Telecommunications Training—Agency ITSA
SAS Software Limited	Support for Integrated Database Model
SCOPEC International	Enhancements to the Resource Management Systems—Agency ITSA
SEMA Group	Administrative Resource Management Systems—Agency ITSA
SEMA Group	Development of Local Office Project Social Fund Computer System—Agency ITSA
SEMA Group	Feasibility Study into the Future Processing of Social Fund Claims—Agency ITSA
SEMA Group	Local Office Project—Social Fund Full Study—Agency ITSA
SEMA Group	Local Office Micro Project—Social Fund—Agency ITSA
SEMA Group	Social Fund: IT User Development
SEMA Group	Study on Computer Development of North Fylde Central Office Future Organisation
SEMA Group	Social Fund Support
SERCO Limited	Purchasing Consultancy
SIA Ltd.	Evaluation of Computer Aided Personal Interviewing
Stuart McKeckie Limited	Service Development Team (Southern Territories)
Symonds Facilities Management Plc	Headquarters Relocation Projects (Facilities Management)
Telecommuting Management Consultants	Telecommuting Scoping Study—Agency ITSA
Telecomputing Plc	National Health Service Superannuation
The Harry Mitchell College	Administrative Resource Management System (Work Measurement Pilot Exercise)
The Pre-Retirement Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Introduction to Pre-Retirement Education
TOP-IX Ltd.	Administrative Resource Management System (Work Measurement Pilot Exercise)
Touche Ross	Feasibility Study into Hardware and Software Requirements for the Strategy Operations Architecture Project—Agency ITSA
Touche Ross	Lone Parent Study and Survey
Touche Ross	Lone Parenthood Consultancy
Touche Ross	War Pensions
Touche Ross	Administrative Resource Management System (Complementing)
Touche Ross	Integrated Complementing System (Maintenance)
Touche Ross	Management and Finance Information Systems for the Benefits Agency
Touche Ross	Management and Finance Information Systems for the Contributions Unit
Touche Ross	Asset Management in DSS
Touche Ross	Performance Indicators for Resettlement Units—Agency RA
Triad Special Systems Ltd.	Quality Assurance Package
Trident Quest Pty	Combined Services Architecture—Agency ITSA
Tri-Globe Communications Ltd.	Development of Network Operations Control Section—Agency ITSA
Ulec Services Limited	Clarke House Building Management and Maintenance—Agency ITSA
University College London	Psychologist for the Forms Design Unit
Warwick University	National Insurance Contributions Yield
Whitegates Estate Agents	Headquarters Relocation Projects
World Systems plc	Feasibility Study into the DRS 6000 Report Produced by ITSA-Procurement—Agency ITSA
World Systems plc	DRS 6000 Development—Agency ITSA
WS Atkins	Provision of Telecoms within DSS Headquarters—Agency ITSA
WS Atkins	Quality Management Group Support—Agency ITSA

Where no Executive Agency is shown, the consultancy work was undertaken for sections of the Department of Social Security which had not attained Agency status by the end of the period in question.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions have taken place with trades unions about the status of the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: Before it was submitted, sponsors of the Royal Group of Hospitals' application for HSS trust status met trade unions on many occasions.

Trades unions are among the bodies invited, as part of the public consultation, to comment on the application.

Tobacco

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans his Department has to mark World No Tobacco Day on 31 May; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department had no specific plans for marking World No Tobacco Day. Northern Ireland Departments adopted a formal policy on smoking in 1987. The introduction of a non-smoking policy is being actively pursued in the Northern Ireland Office.

Road Improvement Schemes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what minor road improvement schemes have been carried out in the Downpatrick and Craigavon divisions between 1 March 1985 and 31 March in the current year.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Downpatrick

Scheme	*Description*
A22 in Lisbane Village	Widening and reconstruction of existing carriageway
Hillsborough Old Road, Stage1, Lisburn	Footway provision and carriageway widening
Old Grand Jury Road, Saintfield	Footway provision and junction improvement
Cow Lane, Castlewellan	Carriageway improvements
Croft Road, Holywood	Footway provision and carriageway widening
Duncans Road, Stage 1, Lisburn	Road widening and footway provision
Bryansford Road, Newcastle	Footway provision
A24 south of Ballynahinch in townland of Ballymaglave	Carriageway widening and sight distance improvements
Duncans Road, Stage 2, Lisburn	Footway provision
Blaris Road, Sprucefield	Footway provision and junction improvement
Whinney Hill, Holywood	Footway provision and carriageway widening
Church Road, Holywood	Sight distance improvements and carriageway widening
Ballycrochan Road, Bangor	Carriageway widening and footway provision
Bridge Street, Comber, Stage 1	Street reconstruction
Killyleagh Streets	Reconstruction of Catherine Street and Cross Street
Circular Road, Castlewellan	Carriageway improvements and footway provision
Ballyskeagh Road, Lambeg, Stage 2	Sight distance improvements and carriageway realignment
Bridge Street, Comber, Stage 2	Street reconstruction
Talbot Street/William Street, Newtownards	Junction improvement
Vianstown Road, Downpatrick	Sight distance improvements and carriageway reconstruction
Hillsborough Old Road, Stage 2, Lisburn	Footway provision and carriageway widening
Ballystockart Road, Comber, Stage 1	Carriageway widening and reconstruction
Downpatrick/Ardglass Road, Stage 1	Carriageway widening and sight distance improvements
Ballystockart Road, Comber, Stage 2	Carriageway widening and reconstruction
Seahill Road/Bangor Road junction, Cultra	Junction improvement
Downpatrick to Ardglass Road, Stage 2	Carriageway widening and sight distance improvements
Old Holywood Road at Redburn Country Park	Sight distance improvements and carriageway widening
Belsize Road, Lisburn	Footway and roundabout provision
Saintfield Road Roundabout, Lisburn	Junction improvements
Dunover Road, Ballywalter	Footway provision and carriageway realignment

Craigavon

Scheme	*Description*
A28 Drumgollif, Caledon Armagh	Realignment/widening
A29 Tullygoonigan, Moy, Armagh	Junction improvement
B131 Legacorry, Richhill	Bridge reconstruction and realignment
B10 Lisnasliggan, Rathfriland	Realignment/widening
B10 Rathfriland Road, Banbridge	Widening
A26 Smiths Hill, Banbridge	Junction improvement and realignment
Huntly Road, Lenderg, Banbridge	Realignment/widening
New Link, Dromore	New road to replace Castle Street
A3 Magheralin	Realignment/widening
Charles Street Portadown	Realignment/widening
Greencastle Street Kilkeel	Junction improvement
A25 Orchard Bar, Rathfriland	Realignment/widening
Mill Road, Kilkeel	Realignment/widening
Newtown Road Rostrevor 2	Realignment/widening
Francis Street, Newry	Reconstruction/widening
Ballyholland Road, Newry	Road widening
B30 Cregganduff 2, Crossmaglen	Realignment/widening
B133 McKnights Hill, Bessbrook	Junction improvement widening
B2 Gilpinstown, Lurgan	Realignment/widening
Canal Bridge, Newry	Bridge reconstruction widening
A25 Camlough 2, Newry	Junction improvement widening
A27 Aughlish, Scarva	Junction improvement widening
B77 Vinecash, Loughgall, Portadown	Junction improvement realignment
A26 Currys Turn, Waringstown	Junction improvement realignment
B3 Corcreeny, Lurgan	Realignment/widening
B3 Pound Road, Newry	Reconstruction/widening
B30 Campbells Bridge, Crossmaglen	Realignment/widening
B31 Ballymoran, Armagh	Realignment/widening
B3 Dunlarg, Keady	Realignment/widening
Inn Road, Dollingstown	Road widening
Derrylileagh, Maghery, Portadown	Realignment/widening
A2 Killowen 3(2), Rostrevor	Realignment/widening
Clonallen Road I, Warrenpoint	Road widening
Callan Bridge, Armagh	New Footbridge

A26 Lawrencetown, Banbridge	Realignment widening
Barban Hill, Dromore 1	Road widening
Ballymoney Hill, Banbridge	Road widening
A4 Dungannon Road 1, Portadown	Verge widening
Clonallen Road 2, Warrenpoint	Road widening
A51 Marlacoo, Markethill	Realignment/widening
A50 Ballievy, Banbridge	Sight line improvement
Old Newry Road, Banbridge	Road widening
Barban Hill, Dromore 2	Road widening
A2 Killowen 1B, Rostrevor	Realignment/widening
A3 Lisglyn, Armagh	Road widening

Education (Access Funds)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many students are currently receiving access funds from each education board in Northern Ireland;

(2) what was the total amount of access funds allocated to each education board in Northern Ireland;

(3) how many students were refused access funding by each education board in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is:

Board	*No. of students in receipt of access funding*	*Access Funds allocated (1990-91 financial year) £*	*No. of students refused access funding*
Belfast	67	29,000	10
Southern	73	29,000	33
South-Eastern	33	29,000	8
North-Eastern	36	29,000	2
Western	129	28,000	67

WALES

School Tests (Moderators)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the training and appointment of moderators for school tests at *(a)* seven and *(b)* 11 years-old.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Moderation is part of the national curriculum assessment arrangements which, for seven and 11-year-olds, is the responsibility of the individual local education authorities.

Each LEA, supported by total grant approved expenditure of £2·2 million in 1991-92, is required to develop assessment implementation plans which cover the administrative and training arrangements for moderation. The School Examinations and Assessment Council has provided detailed guidance on moderation which will be updated later this year for use in the 1992 arrangements.

Radioactivity

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating levels of Strontium 90 detected in rainfall in Wales in each year since 1961; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Monitoring of Strontium-90 in rainfall has been conducted on a regular basis at only two sites in Wales. The available information is given in the table.

Annual Deposition of Strontium-90 from Rainfall[1] Megabecquerels per square kilometre

	Milford Haven[2]	*Bridgend[3]*
1961	91	[4]
1962	350	[4]
1963	770	[4]
1964	430	[4]
1965	180	[4]
1966	110	[4]
1967	45	[4]
1968	46	[4]
1969	31	[4]
1970	44	[4]
1971	52	[4]
1972	[4]	[4]
1973	[4]	[4]
1974	[4]	[4]
1975	[4]	8·1
1976	[4]	9·7
1977	[4]	15·4
1978	[4]	12·3
1979	[4]	15·7
1980	[4]	5·6
1981	[4]	20·3
1982	[4]	4·2
1983	[4]	[5]
1984	<5	[5]
1985	<3	[5]
1986	2·2	[5]
1987	<2	[5]
1988	<2	[5]
1989	[4]	[5]
1990	[4]	[5]

[1] Levels reached a peak in the early 1960s following nuclear weapons tests in 1961 and 1962. 1981 levels were increased by fallout from Chinese atomic weapons tests in October 1980.
[2] *Source:* Atomic Energy Authority Technology.
[3] *Source:* National Radiological Protection Board.
[4] Not available.
[5] Nil or below limits of detection.

General Practitioners

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any proposals to issue guidelines to general practitioner fund-holders and to hospitals regarding preferential placing on hospitals waiting lists for general practitioner fund-holders' patients.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I do not propose to issue guidance at present.

Road Safety

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state how many people have been killed as a result of road accidents in Wales in each of the past 10 years, and what is the total to date this year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the table:

Persons killed as a result of road accidents in Wales

	Number
1981	275
1982	300
1983	245
1984	250
1985	245

	Number
1986	235
1987	220
1988	226
1989	231
[1]1990	248
[1] [2]1991	12

[1] Provisional.
[2] 1991 data from all police authority areas are only available centrally to end of January.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he proposes to take any further measures to improve road safety in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We are continually seeking to improve road safety. For example, we are currently encouraging the use of rear seat belts which will be compulsory as from 1 July.

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects *(a)* to invite tenders for the construction work on the A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais improvement and *(b)* construction work to start on the A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais improvement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" shows the scheme as scheduled to start before April 1994. It is not possible to give a firmer indication of timing at this stage.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to improve valley road links to the motorway system.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for improving these roads rests with the respective local highway authorities. A number of major improvement schemes are receiving transport grant support from the Department and information is given in the Welsh Office departmental report published in February.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the north-south road links in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have received a number of representations. The Government's policy is to upgrade the A483 and A470 by means of selective improvements. Details of planned schemes are set out in "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" published in 1989, and the supplement published in February 1991.

Smoking

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken to discourage tobacco smoking in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In Wales the campaign against smoking is carried out on many fronts. In 1987 the Government established a special authority, the Health Promotion Authority for Wales (HPAW), to promote better health in the Principality. The authority has taken on the work of Heartbeat Wales in promoting programmes to stop smoking and to stop people from ever starting.

HPAW in association with other organisations has mounted a number of national and local campaigns including National No Smoking Day in Wales, the recent launch of a passive no smoking leaflet, two mobile life education centres which feature the effect smoking has on the body and which are currently touring primary schools in Wales, and initiatives for employers, public transport operators and the retail and catering trade to provide no smoking areas. Moreover, HPAW, ASH-in-Wales (which has Government support) and Tenovus are jointly funding the forthcoming Smokebusters Cymru project, partly through additional exchequer funding made available for the project.

Recently the Department produced protocols for investment in health gain in the areas of cancer and cardiovascular diseases which acknowledge the health gain benefits of discouraging smoking. These protocols are aimed mainly at district health authorities (DHAs) and family health service authorities (FHSAs) to assist them to develop their local strategies for health. These strategies will cover local approaches to tackling heart disease, strokes, cancers, etc. and include a section on health promotion and influencing lifestyle factors detrimental to good health one of which is the incidence of smoking. Furthermore, many DHAs in Wales have a declared policy on non-smoking on NHS premises and whose health promotion units run anti-smoking programmes at local level. In the development of patient care GPs have been obliged by their terms of service to provide health promotion advice to their patients. GPs who organise and provide advice through health promotion clinics including anti-smoking clinics may be entitled to a special compensation fee.

Health Authority Funding

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the capital allocation to each of the health authorities in Wales for each year since 1985, at 1985 prices.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the table.

The discretionary capital allocations, notified to each health authority in Wales at the start of each financial year in the period 1985-86 to 1991-92 were as follows:

£ million 1985-86 prices

Health authority	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Clwyd	2·697	3·458	3·747	4·218	5·555	4·670	6·023
East Dyfed	1·209	1·550	1·679	1·891	1·580	2·384	3·075
Gwent	2·823	3·619	3·922	4·415	5·871	4·600	5·933
Gwynedd	0·991	1·270	1·376	1·550	1·399	1·272	1·640
Mid Glamorgan	3·089	3·960	4·292	4·831	5·759	5·991	7·727
Pembrokeshire	0·573	0·735	0·796	0·896	1·577	1·464	1·888
Powys	0·584	0·750	0·811	0·914	1·277	0·828	1·068
South Glamorgan	1·482	1·900	2·059	2·317	2·870	5·905	7·616

Health authority	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
West Glamorgan	2·692	3·452	3·741	4·211	5·409	6·005	7·744
Total	16·140	20·695	22·423	25·243	31·298	33·120	42·714

Dog Bites

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* children under 16 years and *(b)* adults have been treated under the national health service for bites by dogs in each of the past five years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the future of the housing stock of the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I shall be consulting shortly upon draft regulations to govern the disposal of Development Board for Rural Wales housing stock.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Development Board for Rural Wales houses there are; and in what towns and villages they are situated.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Development Board currently owns 1,259 dwellings located as follows:

Location	
Newtown	1,186
Llandrindod Wells	20
Tywyn	26
Bala	10
Dolgellau	7
Abercrave, Ystradgynlais	10

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Development Board for Rural Wales houses have been sold in each of the past 10 years; and what was the total income from house sales in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is given in the following table:

	Number of dwellings	Income (£000s)[1]
1981	12	144
1982	20	230
1983	27	352
1984	9	111
1985	11	130
1986	21	250
1987	35	491
1988	47	710
1989	58	1,075
1990	69	1,339

Source: Development Board for Rural Wales sales returns.

[1] Income figures are totals of the selling prices of disposed dwellings and as such no account is taken of mortgages granted by the Board on any of these dwellings: 6 such mortgages were granted over the period.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like me, welcomes the extension of home ownership that these sales represent.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Development Board for Rural Wales houses have been involved in the rents to mortgages scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Board has received 105 formal applications and has completed sales of 23 dwellings. This represents almost 3 per cent. of the board's eligible stock and is as successful as the initial take-up under our right to buy policy.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consult the tenants of Development Board for Rural Wales houses before he permits a change of status of such houses.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The draft regulations will include provision for tenants to express their wishes.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which Development Board for Rural Wales housing stock is earmarked for housing association status.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It will be for the board to formulate its proposals in the light of regulations to be made in due course. I shall in no way prejudge my response to such proposals.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* trade unionists, *(b)* lawyers, *(c)* women, *(d)* men and *(e)* business men have been appointed to training and enterprise councils in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: At May 1991, board members of the TECs in Wales included *(a)* three trade unionists, *(b)* one lawyer, *(c)* nine women, *(d)* 87 men and *(e)* 68 business men.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to enable road and rail traffic to have better access to the channel tunnel rail link.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provision of rail links is a matter for British Rail, which published its plans for channel tunnel services in December 1989 as required by section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. British Rail is now working up its proposals. Planned road improvements are set out in "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s', and the 1991 supplement. Further major schemes to improve communications in north-east Clwyd and south-east Wales were announced on 14 May.

SCOTLAND

Broadleaved Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what area of Britain's broadleaved forest is at present productive for timber; and what percentage of the United Kingdom's hardwood timber needs this satisfies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are 811,000 hectares of broadleaved woodland in Britain, of which 615,000 hectares are classed as productive for timber. Some 23 per cent. of our total hardwood timber consumption is at present met by broadleaves grown in this country.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the management of Britain's broadleaved forest is being directed towards achieving a reduction in imports of socially and ecologically sensitive tropical hardwoods.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's broadleaves policy is successfully encouraging an increase in the area of broadleaved forest in Britain. In addition, the Government will be making management grants available from April 1992 under the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme to encourage the improved management of existing woodlands. Taken together, these measures can be expected to lead in due course to a significant increase in the total production of timber from Britain's broadleaved forests. However, hardwood timber grown in Britain currently meets only a quarter of total consumption, and direct substitution of certain tropical hardwoods by domestic timber supplies may not always be feasible because of the different qualities of timber involved.

Dogs

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has on the number of dogs in Scotland;

(2) if he will estimate how many *(a)* rottweilers and *(b)* pit bull terriers there are in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dogs have been destroyed under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 in each of the past five years; and of these how many were *(a)* rottweilers and *(b)* pit bull terriers.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Forestry Commission (Land)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to whom the Forestry Commission has disposed of any land notified as a site of special scientific interest since 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Forestry Commission sold 36 areas of land containing sites of special scientific interest in the period from 1 April to 31 March 1991. Permission from the purchasers to divulge their names has been given in respect of 17 of these areas, details of which are given in the following table:

County	*Property*	*Year sold*	*Purchaser*
England			
Bedfordshire	Marston Thrift	1987	Bedfordshire county council
Buckinghamshire	Hog and Hollowhill	1987	Buckinghamshire county council
Cumbria	Pool Bank	1988	Nature Conservancy Council
North Yorkshire	Little Beck Wood	1986	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
North Yorkshire	Stapleton Park	1986	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Northumberland	Biddlestone Lot 1	1986	P. Burgess
Northumberland	Briarwood Banks	1988	Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Warwickshire	Knavenhill and Boundary	1988	Mr. Hodgkinson
West Sussex	Kings Park Plaist	1988	Southern Water
Wales			
Dyfed	Panteg, Pencelli, Pontbren	1988	Dyfed Wildlife Trust
Dyfed	Coed Rheidol	1990	Nature Conservancy Council
Scotland			
Borders	Pease Dean	1988	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Borders	Gamescleugh (pt)	1989	Mr. and Mrs. Watson
Highland	Beinn Eighe	1989	Nature Conservancy Council
Highland	Glenspean	1988	A. E. Reader and others
Highland	Loch Insch Plantations	1989	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Strathclyde	Tiroran/Scobull	1989	D. M. Holman

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all lands owned by the Forestry Commission which have been notified as SSSIs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A list of the 393 areas of Forestry Commission land notified as SSSIs has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all land in England and Wales which was owned by the Forestry Commission and has been sold; and if he will show in his answer the name of the purchaser.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 14 March 1991, *Official Report*, column *691*. A list of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission in the period from 27 July 1981 to 31 December 1990 has now been placed in the Library. It includes the names of those purchasers who have given their consent to such information being made public.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all land in England and Wales which was owned by the Forestry Commission and has been sold, for which local authorities have been able to enter into an access agreement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such agreements have been entered into pending the introduction of the procedures outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) in the answer he gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 21 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns *164-6*. The Forestry Commission has prepared draft guidelines setting out the details of these procedures which are currently the subject of consultation with a wide range of public and private bodies concerned with public access to the countryside, forestry and land management. The new arrangements will be introduced as soon as these consultations have been concluded.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of unfilled speech therapy posts in Greater Glasgow health board for the Southern general hospital, the Western infirmary and Gartnavel hospitals, the Victoria infirmary, the Royal infirmary and Stobhill hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is one full-time speech therapist vacancy at Gartnavel general hospital and one full-time vacancy at the Southern general hospital. Both posts were advertised on 30 May.

Forestry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to produce a new set of objectives for forestry policy in England and Wales, covering *(a)* environmental needs *(b)* public enjoyment and *(c)* timber products.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The objectives of the Government's forestry policy have evolved in recent years to reflect the increasingly diverse role perceived for forestry in Britain, with a greater emphasis being placed on social and environmental benefits as well as on timber production. There are no plans to produce a new set of objectives at this stage.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans to control the commercial afforestation of hilly areas in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Forestry Commission's consultations with local authorities and other statutory bodies in relation to grant-aid applications act as an effective control over new planting schemes. The consultation procedures have been strengthened by the introduction of arrangements whereby the Forestry Commission may require grant applicants to carry out an environmental assessment of new planting proposals where these are likely to have significant effects on the environment. In addition, the Forestry Commission continues to operate a presumption against the large-scale planting of predominantly coniferous species in the English uplands. Taken together, these measures represent an effective system of regulating planting in the uplands.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number, species and cause of death of birds of prey discovered in 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as shown in the following table:

		Cause of death				
Species	*Number*	*Trauma*	*Disease*	*Starvation*	*Poisoned*	*Unknown*
Barn owl	1	1	—	—	—	—
Buzzard	34	4	5	4	13	8
Eagle	6	—	—	1	4	1
Goshawk	1	—	—	—	—	1
Hen harrier	2	—	—	—	2	—
Kestrel	12	3	—	3	—	6
Merlin	2	—	—	—	—	2
Peregrine falcon	4	1	1	2	—	—
Red kite	2	—	—	—	—	2
Sparrow hawk	17	8	1	2	—	6
Tawny owl	4	3		—	—	1
Total	85	20	7	12	19	27

Health Board Contracts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts for hospital and health board services awarded so far under the competitive tendering process by Ayrshire and Arran health board, including successful tenderer and value of contract.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Contracts awarded in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area are expected to release savings of over £2·5 million. These savings release resources for reinvestment in direct patient care.

The information is as follows:

Hospital Unit	*Service Type*	*Contractor*	*Previous cost £000s*	*Tender value £000s*
Crosshouse	Catering	In-house	813	779
Crosshouse	Domestic	In-house	808	765
Ayrshire Central	Catering	In-house	525	516
Ayrshire Central	Domestic	In-house	430	401
Head Office	Hotel	In-house	38	34
North Clinics and Health Centres	Hotel	In-house	56	55
Kirklandside	Hotel	In-house	411	401
Ballochmyle/Holmhead	Hotel	In-house	1,286	1,142

Hospital Unit	*Service Type*	*Contractor*	*Previous cost £000s*	*Tender value £000s*
Ailsa	Hotel	In-house	1,474	1,399
Ayrshire Central/Ravenspark	Hotel	In-house	1,013	947
Biggart/Thornyflat	Hotel	In-house	599	537
Davidson Cottage	Hotel	In-house	111	100
Crosshouse	Hotel	In-house	777	692
South Clinics and Health Centres/Maybole Hospital	Hotel	In-house	51	43
Arrol Park Resource Centre	Hotel	Mediguard	new service	359
All Board	Vehicle maintenance	In-house	136	121
All board	Painting	[1]	309	195
		[2]	170	114
		[3]—	196	168

[1] Moss Painting
[2] Baxter/Gillespie
[3] Baxter/Gillespie
Note: In this context "hotel" means a combined contract including cleaning, portering, security and telephonists.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals, in relation to section 15A of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, to introduce mandatory, all-seating facilities to football stadia and other sports grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The grounds of 31 Scottish football clubs and the national rugby stadium at Murrayfield are designated under the 1975 Act. The Scottish football authorities have set up the Scottish stadia committee to monitor the progress made by the owners of designated football grounds and the committee will be reporting progress annually to my right hon. Friend. The Scottish Office Education Department circular number 10/1991 of 28 March 1991 made it clear that, should progress on a voluntary basis be inadequate, we would consider seeking statutory enforcement powers.

Caledonian MacBrayne

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance has been given in each of the past five years by the European Community to Caledonian MacBrayne to operate essential public passenger ferry services between the mainland and the islands and among the islands; what sums are to be provided by the European Community for this purpose in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The financial assistance provided to Caledonian MacBrayne by the European regional development fund through grants towards new ships, piers and shore terminals for essential ferry services over the past five years is as follows:—

Year	*£ million*
1986-87	1·45
1987-88	1·79
1988-89	2·19
1989-90	2·69
1990-91	3·35

It is not possible to predict the amounts for the years 1991-92 to 1993-94 as Caledonian MacBrayne, like other bodies, will require to make applications in respect of proposed capital expenditure. Such applications will be considered on their merits by a programme monitoring Committee which includes representatives of central and local government, the European Community and other organisations. However, grants from the European regional development fund will cease to be available in their present form in 1993. No guarantee can, therefore, be given that individuals applications which may be approved in principle will receive grant.

Licensing Legislation

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he has issued to local authorities about the changes in licensing legislation brought about by the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office Home and Health Department issued a circular to local authorities, licensing boards and other interested parties on 12 December 1990 explaining the changes to be made to liquor licensing law by part III of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990, which came into force on 1 January 1991. A copy of the circular has been placed in the Library.

Lothian Regional Council

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet hon. Members representing Lothian constituencies to discuss Lothian regional council's financial problems.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1991]:* I met representatives of Lothian regional council on Friday 17 May to hear their representations against my proposed reduction of £50 in their personal community charge.

I remain satisfied that Lothian's planned expenditure for 1991-92 is "excessive and unreasonable". However, since the financial year is well under way, I have indicated my willingness not to pursue capping action if the council agrees to reduce its charge by £37, the equivalent of a £18·5 million cut in expenditure.

In view of this meeting, during which council representatives raised a number of financial problems, I see no need for a further meeting with hon. Members.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 6 June 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Landlord and Tenant Legislation

Mr. Gill: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Government will implement the recommendations contained in the Law Commission's report on landlord and tenant distress for rent (Law Com. 194).

The Attorney-General: Having considered this report the Lord Chancellor has decided that it would be right to invite views on the conclusions reached by the Law Commission and in particular on the question whether, if the case for abolition is in general made out, the remedy of distress for rent should nevertheless be retained for business tenancies.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning his payments to stockbrokers for services rendered in the course of privatisation of the electricity supply industry of England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Secretary of State has received one representation on the payment of selling commissions in respect of the regional electricity companies' share offers. The process of making the relevant payments is under way.

Refuse-to-energy Plant

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what representations he has received to date about the proposed refuse-to-energy plant in Belvedere;

(2) if he will institute a public inquiry to investigate the proposed refuse-to-energy plant in Belvedere.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has directed Cory Environmental to advertise its application for his consent to construct a waste-fired power station at Belvedere and a period up to 6 June 1991 has been allowed in which objections from the public can be made to him. In addition the local planning authority has until 12 August 1991 by which to make its views on the application known to him.

Until he has seen all such objections and has received the views of the local planning authority, it is too early to say whether a public inquiry will be necessary. However, if the local planning authority objects to the application there is a statutory obligation to call for a public inquiry to be held.

To date, my Department has registered over 50 objections to the application.

European Energy Council

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on issues discussed and decisions taken at the European Energy Council meeting in Brussels on 31 May.

Mr. Wakeham: The Council adopted the directive on transit of gas, concluding the package of proposals introduced by the Commission in July 1989 as a first step towards liberalising the Community's energy market. The United Kingdom fully supports that process and looks forward to the introduction of further measures by the Commission to increase competition and open markets in energy.

In the field of energy efficiency, a political agreement was reached on the SAVE programme, which the Commission introduced at the Energy Council in October 1990. SAVE is intended to provide a framework for co-ordinating member states' own programmes of efficient energy use. The way is now clear, once the European Parliament has given its opinion, to adopt the decision.

The Council also considered the Commission's proposals on oil crisis measures and contingency oil stocks. The Council recognised that the Community's existing provisions needed review, but did not agree that the Commission's proposals were appropriate, especially in relation to the International Energy Agency. The Commission will reconsider its proposals.

The Council also briefly discussed the proposed European energy charter.

"Energy, Looking to the Future"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he published his pamphlet, "Energy, Looking to the Future"; how many copies have been printed; at what cost; and to whom the pamphlet is being distributed.

Mr. Wakeham: I published the pamphlet "Energy: Looking to the Future" on 1 May when it was announced via a Department of Energy press release. Initially 1,000 copies were printed at a cost of £1,238. Demand has been such that another 500 copies have been printed at a cost of £658. The pamphlet has been and continues to be distributed to energy and Lobby journalists and to interested parties in the United Kingdom and overseas.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Benefits and Allocations

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of people claiming *(a)* one-parent benefit and *(b)* the widowed mother's allowance who are taxpayers.

Mr. Maude: In 1991-92 it is estimated that 280,000 taxpayers will claim one-parent benefit and 35,000 taxpayers will claim widowed mother's allowance.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further progress has been made to enable Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to operate fully on next steps lines.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 13 February

the publication of a framework document for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, and of the first three in the series of executive unit framework documents which describe the responsibilities, freedoms and accountabilities in individual units within the Department—*Official Report*, columns 480-81. Customs and Excise have now published framework documents for each of the remaining executive units, comprising:

Accountant and Comptroller General's Office
Belfast Collection
Birmingham Collection
Dover Collection
East Anglia Collection
Edinburgh Collection
Enforcement Divison
Glasgow Collection
Information Technology Divisions
Internal Audit Unit
Investigation Division
Leeds Collection
Liverpool Collection
London Airports Collection
London Central Collection
London North and West Collection
London Port Collection
London South Collection
Northampton Collection
Northern England Collection
Reading Collection
Solicitor's Office
Southampton Collection
South Wales and Borders Collection
South West England Collection
Tariff and Statistical Office
Training Services Division

Copies of each of the documents have been placed in the Library. This is an important step towards the full operation of Customs and Excise on next steps lines, and is accompanied by continuing progress on the action programme annexed to the framework document for the Department.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by the Treasury, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The hon. Member was given the consumption figures for 1989 in cash terms in the answer of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) on 14 May 1990, in column *274*. The information at 1990-91 prices, which covers major offices only, is as follows:

	Gas		*Electricity*		*Liquid fuel*	
	'000 therms	*£'000*	*'000 kWh*	*£'000*	*'000 litres*	*£'000*
Consumption—1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991						
Government Offices, Great George Street, London SW1 (311,500 sq ft)	204·0	42·9	3,375	193·0	42·4	8·7
Chessington Computer Centre, Surrey (86,600 sq ft)	—	—	935	42·6	248·0	27·0
Riverwalk House, London SW1 (72,200 sq ft)	68·1	18·1	1,328	81·5	—	—
Consumption—1 January 1989 to 31 December 1989						
Government Offices, Great George Street, London SW1 (331,500 sq ft)	169·0	41·6	3,341	189·6	42·0	4·4
Chessington Computer Centre, Surrey (86,600 sq ft)	1·0	0·3	935	42·8	97·0	11·3
Riverwalk House, London SW1 (72,200 sq ft)	57·0	14·8	1,449	79·0	—	—

Note: All figures rounded.

Figures for years before 1989 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Taxation

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the extra yield in a full year if income tax were unified with national insurance contribution at a rate of 34 per cent. assuming *(a)* no change to higher rate income tax and *(b)* higher rate income tax at 49 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 4 June 1991]:* At 1991-92 income levels, it is estimated that the net yield of increasing the basic rate of income tax to 34 per cent. and of abolishing national insurance contributions for employees and the self-employed would be about £0·8 billion. This yield would increase to about £3·8 billion if the higher rate of income tax were increased to 49 per cent. These estimates ignore any behavioural effects which might result from such changes.

TRANSPORT

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name

of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. McLoughlin: Expenditure in the financial year 1990-91 was £3·055 million. Contracts awarded were as follows:

JMP Consulting	Routine Maintenance Management System data capture device
WS Atkins	CHART/DEFLEC/CHAPS programme maintenance
CACI Ltd	NIS training
EASAMS Ltd	NIS maintenance
TPA	ARCADY/OSCADY programme maintenance
TPA	ROADWAY programme maintenance
Wootton Jeffreys	COBA9/QUADRO2 programme maintenance
SIA Ltd	NIS core data
BIS Applied Systems Ltd	NIS scheme monitoring
CACI Ltd	NIS IHMS2/3
KPMG	RMMS logical maintenance
Mott MacDonald	HRM maintenance
Dunsmore Data and Information	PANDEF programme development
PA Consulting Services	NIS distribution study
PA Consulting Services	NIS stage 1+PIR
LOGSYS	QIS programme development
P&P Corporate Sytems	Consultancies on LANs
Hoskyns/RAL	Capacity planning at DVOIT
SERCO Systems	Automatic Core Traffic Census software conversion
Wootton Jeffreys Consultants Ltd	London Area Transport survey
Pinpoint	LATS Address Coding Office
Quantime	NTS tabulation
Forvus	NTS editing
Quantime	NTS parameterisation and patching
DMR Group	Aviation reservation consultancy
Caltronic Systems	Feasibility study
Sapphire	DataEase consultancy
WordPerfect UK	Review of agencies WP facilities
SWK Pavement Engineering	Pavement design
PA Consulting Services	Review of Project M
PA Consulting Services	Project management Seq 1
PA Consulting Services	PGT practice review
WS Atkins	Preparation of 7th edition of "Specification for Highway Works" and associated documents
Howard Humphreys and Partners	Highway construction details
Andrew G. Blyth	To establish suitable parameters for defining characteristics of craft of lightweight construction
ARUP Economic Consultants	International comparison of city environments
Mindworks	Call-off contract for business analysis support
MSG Business Systems	Software advice
PA Consulting Services	Support on "Choice" review
Science and Engineering Research Council	Office systems consultancy
Comshare	Fault analysis—Agency DSA
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Updating the Management Account Model—Agency DSA
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Writing new accounting procedures—Agency DSA
Walker International	Designing financial software—Agency DSA
IBM	Technical advice and support—Agency DVLA
Software AG	Technical advice and support—Agency DVLA
Compass Ltd	Management consultancy on computer operations—Agency DVLA
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Management consultancy analysis and advice—Agency DVLA
Presidium Ltd	Technical advice and support—Agency DVLA
KPMG Management Consulting	Quality assurance review—Agency DVLA
Price Waterhouse	Middle Management development training—Agency DVLA
AC Manning	Stress seminars—Agency DVLA
The Industrial Society	Team briefing training—Agency DVLA
Institute for International Research	Customer service training—Agency DVLA
Institute for International Research	Customer service training—Agency DVLA
Wyndham Leigh	Sale of Marks—Agency DVLA
Hinton and Higgs	Health and Safety Review—Agency VIEA
Oxford Development Group	Support for leadership course and management development—Agency VIEA
PA Consulting Group	Leadership and specialist skills for corporate planning seminar—Agency VIEA

Road Tax Evasion

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans any new initiatives to combat evasion of road tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: With the co-operation of the police, the Department has recently run successful campaigns against road tax evaders in the London and Strathclyde areas. In June, a regional blitz has been launched covering the north-east of England and more are planned during 1991. Such action is very effective both in deterring potential evaders and in catching offenders who have failed to heed the warnings given.

Railway Crossings

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many accidents there have been involving motor vehicles at railway crossings with barriers *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in Britain in each year since 1985-86;

(2) how many accidents there have been involving motor vehicles at open railway crossings *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in Britain in each year since 1985-86.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested in respect of Britain as a whole for the years 1985-89 is set out in the table. Details for 1990 are not yet available, but will be published in the Health and Safety Executive's annual report on railway safety later in the year. Separate information for Welsh crossings is not readily available.

Crossings with barriers

Year	*Number of accidents*
1985	11
1986	10
1987	6
1988	8
1989	3

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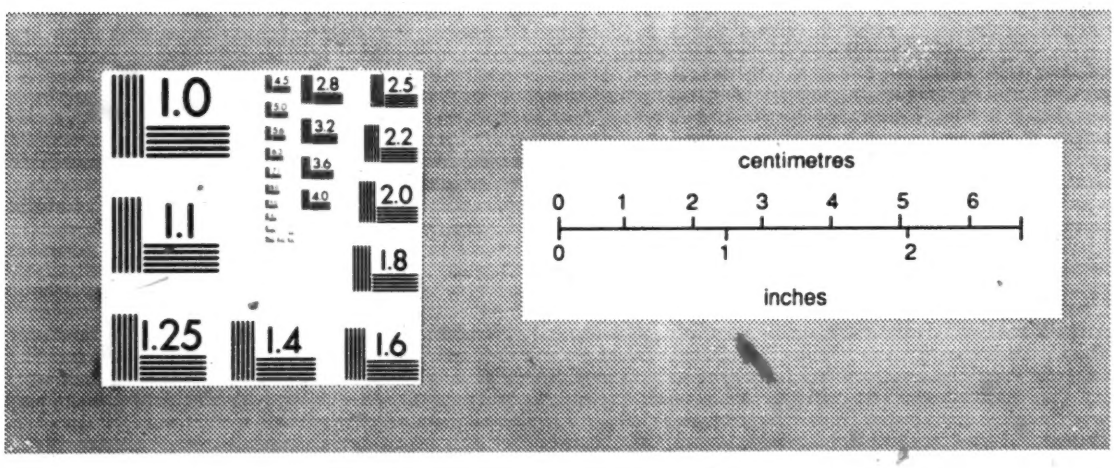

Open crossings (includes those with and without traffic signals)

Year	Number of accidents
1985	16
1986	11
1987	15
1988	20
1989	10

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the approximate capital cost and annual service costs for installing and running crossings with barriers.

Mr. Freeman: Installation costs range between £100,000 and £135,000, depending on the type of crossing. Annual running costs for crossings with automatic half barriers are about £12,000. Running costs for manually controlled crossings depend on the level of manning.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress being made in introducing barriers at open railway crossings.

Mr. Freeman: Following the accident at an automatic open crossing at Lockington in 1986, Professor P. F. Stott was appointed to carry out a review of safety at this type of crossing. He recommended that safety at some crossings might be improved either by providing half-barriers or by a reduction in the speed at which the train approaches the crossings.

All proposed speed reductions at crossings have now been implemented. Under the Stott recommendations 126 crossings were to be converted to half-barriers. Of these, 38 crossings have been converted to standard automatic half-barrier protection and six have been converted to automatic barrier crossings locally monitored by the train driver.

BR's target for completion of this work is late 1992. The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate is keeping the programme under review and regularly monitors progress.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway crossings are open crossings and how many have barriers *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in Britain.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of automatic open railway crossings and automatic crossings with barriers are as follows:

	auto open crossings	*auto barrier crossings*
(a) In Wales	29	10
(b) In Britain	190	370

Note:—(b) include (a)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have been killed in each year since 1985-86 in accidents involving *(a)* open railway crossings and *(b)* crossings with barriers.

Mr. Freeman: The information for 1985-89 is as follows; that for 1990 is not yet available.

Year	Fatalities at crossings with barriers	Fatalities at open crossings[1]
1985	3	2
1986	5	[2]11
1987	2	2
1988	2	2
1989	—	2

[1] Includes those with and without traffic signals.
[2] All fatalities in one accident at Lockington.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the approximate capital cost and annual service costs for installing and running open railway crossings.

Mr. Freeman: For automatic open level crossings the average installation cost is £73,000 and the annual running costs are about £12,000. Figures for open crossings with no lights are not readily available.

Motor Cycle Licence

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current cost of a motor cycle licence; when it was last increased; and what was the cost before the increase.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is:

	Current £	*Previous* £
Motorcycles not over 150cc	15	10
Over 150cc up to 250cc	30	20
All other motorcycles	50	40

The last increase was in 1985.

Decca Navigation System

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has made a decision on extending the life of the Decca navigation system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering a revised offer put forward by Racal Electronics plc to extend the life of the Decca navigator system into the next century. He expects to reach a decision shortly.

Driving Licence Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the organisations which have shown reasonable cause as outlined in section 15(1) of the Road Vehicle (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 to receive personal data from the DVLA; whether he has discussed the DVLA's disclosure procedures with the Data Protection Registrar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Regulation 15 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 requires the Secretary of State to provide, free of charge from the vehicle register, names and addresses of vehicle keepers to the police and local authorities for use in connection with an offence. The information must also be made available to others who can show reasonable cause for their inquiry. There is no list of organisations which have shown reasonable cause as each request is dealt with on its merits when it is received.

The advice of the Data Protection Registrar has been sought on a number of occasions about DVLA's disclosure procedures, most recently on 15 April 1991. He has expressed himself satisfied.

Train Doors (Accidents)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss fatal accidents concerning train doors.

Mr. Freeman: After I have received the report of the study now being carried out by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on what action is to be taken by the railways inspectorate following the examination of a door which revealed a fault in its slam-shut locking mechanism during an investigation into the death of a passenger who fell from the Birmingham to London InterCity train on 3 December 1990.

Mr. Freeman: At the coroner's inquest into this fatality at Carpenders park, an open verdict was returned. No evidence was available to show from which door, or in what circumstances, the deceased had fallen from the train. I understand that when BR examined the train later, a hinge on one door was found to be faulty, but not unsafe.

The Health and Safety Commission announced on 3 May that Her Majesty's railway inspectorate, and other specialist resources within the Health and Safety Executive, will undertake an investigation into the pattern of falls from passenger trains and whether, or the extent to which, they could be attributable to the design of doors or locks. The results of the investigation, which is now under way, will be published.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission to discuss the inquiry into fatal falls from British Rail trains.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission to discuss the current investigation into train doors. He plans to meet Dr. Cullen shortly to discuss railway safety generally.

Policy Proposals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what additional resources he is making available to support his policy proposals on transport announced on 28 May.

Mr. Rifkind: Any additional resources needed for transport will be discussed in the public expenditure survey in the usual way.

Dornoch Firth

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the creation of a rail bridge across the Dornoch firth.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. It would be for British Rail to bring forward any such proposals.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will now introduce regulations to revise the orange badge scheme for disabled drivers in conformity with the views of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and other disabled person's organisations.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 21 March at column *212*.

Rail Electrification, Scotland

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to reply to correspondence from the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North regarding investment criteria governing rail electrification in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: I replied to the hon. Member's letter on 3 June.

Speedlink

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the annual volume of freight traffic to be transferred from rail to road if the closure of Speedlink is proceeded with.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is still in consultation with customers about the alternative rail options for Speedlink traffic and it is not possible to estimate exactly how much freight traffic will transfer from rail to road when the Speedlink network closes on 8 July.

I understand that British Rail expects to retain well over half the 3 million tonnes of domestic freight currently carried. Wagonload traffic lost to rail is likely to amount to some 1 per cent. of total rail freight.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue directions to British Rail that the Speedlink rail freight service should continue to operate.

Mr. Freeman: No. The Speedlink wagonload network has losses of well over £30 million a year on a turnover of £45 million. To compete with road, rail has to be efficient, competitive and commercial. British Rail plans to develop train load freight services rather than individual wagon services.

Turbo-trains

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has discussed further orders of BREL network turbo trains for regional British Rail lines with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. McLoughlin: Six such vehicles have been ordered for the Oxford-Worcester service to complement the order for 59 vehicles for Paddington services, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State approved on 28 March. The chairman has made no further proposals on other routes.

Track Gauge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for the introduction of continental gauge track for the carriage of freight between the United Kingdom and the continent.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has no such plans. Its commercial judgment is that low-platform wagons offer the most cost-effective means of conveying continental-size containers and swap bodies on the British rail network.

Class 158 Trains

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the incidents involving potential safety risks reported to his Department since the introduction of class 158 trains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Railways (Notice of Accidents) Order 1986 (SI 1986 No. 2187) categorises accident types and specifies the circumstances in which accidents should be reported. The following list shows all accidents, together with causes, involving class 158 trains since their introduction which have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate in accordance with the order. The details for 1991 should be regarded as provisional:

21 January 1990	
Upper Leigh/Newton	Unit struck animal on track
24 November 1990	
Aberdeen (Clay Hills)	Buffer collision in sidings
24 November 1990	
Balloch	Unit struck animal on track
26 November 1990	
Falkirk High	Small fire on DMU
29 November 1990	
Portlethen	Unit struck animal on track
3 December 1990	
Edinburgh Waverley	Coupling failure
8 December 1990	
Glasgow Queen Street	Coupling failure
13 December 1990	
Cadder	Unit struck trespasser—fatality
2 January 1991	
Inverness	Unit struck animal on track
31 January 1991	
Urmston	Unit struck road vehicle (not at a level crossing)
5 February 1991	
Aberdeen	Derailment of empty coaching stock

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects direct passenger services to operate between Scotland and the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail awaits proposals from the manufacturers on the delivery and cost of trains for through day services between places north of London and the continent, and do not expect these trains to be ready before 1994. British Rail still plans to run through night services from the opening of the channel tunnel.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer Monday 3 June 1991]:* Energy consumption figures for the Department of Transport are set out in the following table. These show that between 1985-86 and 1990-91 total annual expenditure at constant prices has been reduced by approximately £1·4 million. During this period the Department of Transport estate remained broadly constant in size. In 1990-91 the Department occupied 3·66 million sq ft of accommodation.

		Electricity KWh (millions)	*Gas Therms (millions)*	*Liquid fuel Litres (thousands)*	*Solid fuel Tonnes*
1985-86					
(a)	£ thousands at cash prices	1,832	588	624	11
(b)	£ thousands at 1990-91 prices	2,459	789	838	15
(c)	Units of consumption	39	2	3,599	171
1986-87					
(a)	£ thousands at cash prices	1,906	616	410	12
(b)	£ thousands at 1990-91 prices	2,472	799	532	16
(c)	Units of consumption	41	2	3,865	187
1987-88					
(a)	£ thousands at cash prices	1,773	623	138	11
(b)	£ thousands at 1990-91 prices	2,183	767	170	14
(c)	Units of consumption	39	2	1,440	176
1988-89					
(a)	£ thousands at cash prices	1,761	496	76	6
(b)	£ thousands at 1990-91 prices	2,018	568	87	7
(c)	Units of consumption	33	2	660	108
1989-90					
(a)	£ thousands at cash prices	1,865	525	81	7
(b)	£ thousands at 1990-91 prices	2,010	566	87	8
(c)	Units of consumption	35	2	701	126

		Electricity KWh (millions)	Gas Therms (millions)	Liquid fuel Litres (thousands)	Solid fuel Tonnes
1990-91					
(a)	£ thousands at cash prices	2,128	426	102	0
(b)	£ thousands at 1990-91 prices	2,128	426	102	0
(c)	Units of consumption	39	1	730	0

Notes:

1. Separate Department of Transport statistics on energy consumption and expenditure are not available before 1985-86. Before then the Property Services Agency managed matters centrally.
2. The breakdown by fuel for 1989-90 is estimated by applying the 1988-89 breakdown to the total expenditure for 1989-90.
3. 1990-91 figures are based on estimated outturn.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Comptroller and Auditor-General

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what was the total number of staff of the Comptroller and Auditor-General in 1961, 1970, 1980 and 1990; and how many were qualified accountants in each of those years.

Sir Peter Hordern: The number of staff employed by the Exchequer and Audit Department and its successor body, the National Audit Office, are shown below together with the numbers of qualified accountants. It should be noted that the role and responsibilities of the National Audit Office as set out in the National Audit Act 1983 are significantly enhanced from those of the Exchequer and Audit Department.

	Total staff	Trained Accountants	Qualified Accountants
1961	536	364	3
1970	585	383	5
1980	689	398	15
1990	911	161	278

Before 1975, all recruits to the audit grades has to pass external examinations following a three-year training programme specially designed to meet the Department's needs but not leading to a recognised accountancy qualification. Since 1975, all audit staff recruits have been required either to possess a recognised accountancy qualification or to study for one.

In addition, at 31 December 1990, 240 staff were at various stages of training towards a professional qualification.

PRIME MINISTER

Military and Defence Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements exist between the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry for conducting trials for military and defence contracts for foreign sales.

The Prime Minister: In the case of technical or operational trials of defence equipment, arrangements for trials are normally made between the customer country and the United Kingdom company involved. On occasion, the Minister of Defence can assist in such trials on a repayment basis. If the conduct of a trial requires equipment to be taken overseas, the DTI would consider any application for an export licence in the normal way.

Cabinet Structure

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now list his Cabinet committees and sub-committees and specify any changes made in Cabinet organisation and committee structure since November 1990.

The Prime Minister: There continue to be four standing committees of the Cabinet: a defence and overseas policy committee and an economic affairs committee under my chairmanship; a home and social affairs committee under the chairmanship of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Privy Seal; and a legislation committee under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. Sub-committees of the standing committees will be continued or established as appropriate. Membership and terms of reference of the standing committees and their sub-committees will remain confidential.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what matters he discussed during his meeting with the President of Zimbabwe.

The Prime Minister: President Mugabe and I discussed the situation in South Africa and the prospects for the October Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting as well as developments in Zimbabwe, including the structural adjustment programme for Zimbabwean economy.

Arms Control

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the middle east arms control and non-proliferation initiative announced by President Bush on 29 May; and whether Her Majesty's Government have made any response to the United States Government on the initiative.

The Prime Minister: We warmly welcome President Bush's imaginative initiative to combat proliferation and the unrestrained spread of conventional weapons in the middle east. We look forward to taking his proposals forward, together with our own ideas, at the forthcoming meeting of the five leading arms exporters in Paris, and thereafter at the London economic summit.

ENVIRONMENT

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management

and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Heseltine: The total spent by my Department, excluding PSAS, on management and computer consultancies was £9·1 million.

The contracts let were:

Consultant and Project	
Action Based Learning	Teamworking/leadership course
Action Resource Centre	Private Sector secondments to City Action Teams
Allan Jones Associates	Representations to Cheshire Structure Plan
Allot and Lomax	European Construction Code
Almondhall Computer Staff	Business Model: Planning Inspectorate
BDO Binder Hamlyn	Grant Redemption Fund
BIS Applied Systems	North Sea Database
Blackwater Valley Training	Stress Management
Bradshaw, Buckton and Ton	European Construction Codes
Building Construction Information Service	Tender price indices
Centre for Transport Studies	Review of transport [Building Research Establishment]
Chapman Hendy	Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust
Computer People (St. Albans)	Bookshop system [BRE]
Comshare	Local authority statistics
Consultants in Environmental Sciences	Cleaning agents; coastal discharges
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	PSA privatisation
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Unif[illegible]
Debenham, Tewson and Chinnocks	Regents Park Zoo
Denis Mills Associates	BSI building code
Denis Walker Associates	Human resources development [Historic Royal Palaces Agency]
Develin and Ptnrs	Positive resource management [BRE]
Edmond Shipway and Partners	City grant monitoring
Electoral Reform Society	Hull shadow Housing Action Trust
Elmcroft Consulting	Accounting support: Property Holdings
Elvendon Press	Wood preservatives
Ernst and Young	Local authority and housing association management and maintenance grant
Flint Neill Partners	BSI building code
Food Service Associates	Office restaurant
Hanlon Computer Systems	Inter-departmental urban database
Healey and Baker	Disposal of New Town assets
Hull City Council	Housing Action Trust team
ICL	Estates database
Imperial War Museum	Staff inspection of the Royal Armouries
Infodoc	BSI building code
Infologistix	Translation service; software evaluation
ISMA Consultants	Computer risk analysis
Jonathan Coates and Associates	Time management course
John Knapton Engineers	BSI building code
Kermon Management Consultants	Network infrastructure project
Kidson Impey	Local authority waste disposal companies
King's College, London	Design improvement controlled experiment
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Recruitment of professional staff to HMIP
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Review of Housing Corporation
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Performance measurements
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Management accounting systems [HRPA]
Land and Urban Analysis	Employment densities
Logica	Shellware: HMIP
Logica	Technical assurance: local authority statistics
Management Development Consultants	Financial training [BRE]
MCP Management Consultants	Organisation and staffing of QEII conference centre
Mindworks	Financial monitoring system
MORI	Barriers against uptake of unleaded petrol
Mouncey and Partners	IT strategy: Property Holdings
Mouncey and Partners	Systems analysis: HMIP
NIFES Consultancy	Energy Conservation [BRE]
Orchard Partners	BSI building code
PA Consulting	Royal Armouries investment appraisal
PA Consulting	Neighbourhood renewal manual
PA Consulting	Network infrastructure project
PA Consulting	Security review of INFORM system [BRE]
Parker Bowers	Teambuilding course
PE International	IT support to the Government Car Service
Peter Peregrinus Ltd.	Register of research
Phronesis Consulting	IT advice to senior management: Property Holdings
PIC Services	Southwark Housing Action Trust
Price Waterhouse	Performance measures
Price Waterhouse	Finance training
Price Waterhouse	Management accounting system
Price Waterhouse	English House Condition Survey
Price Waterhouse	Estates database
Ray Hullcoop Associates	BSI building code
Rofe Kennard and Lapworth	Technical audit of water companies
Safe Neighbourhood Unit	Estate Action
Saxton Bamfylde	Executive recruitment
Shanklan Cox	Rural recycling
Signal UK	Database archiving for Private Office
Smith Associates	Climate change parameters
Softlab	SSADM training: Planning Inspectorate
Spicer and Oppenheim	Management of INFORM [BRE]
Technical Advisory Service Standards	European Construction Code
Touche Ross	Accounting study: Property Holdings
Touche Ross	Interface study: Property Holdings
Touche Ross	IT accountancy: Planning Inspectorate
Tropix Photography	Estate Action photography
Tuffin, Ferraby and Taylor	Works and maintenance services [HRPA]
Turner and Townsend	City Grant monitoring
University of Newcastle	BSI building code
VNG	Conversion of local office systems: Property Holdings
Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board	Certificate of Technical Competence
Watson Hawksley	Technical audits of water companies
Women's Self-Defence Association	Self defence for trainers
World Systems	Training for HMIP
Worthy, K	Management accounting system

W S Atkins	Parliamentary works information management
W S Atkins	Fuel branch IT
W S Atkins	Specification for replacement computer systems: Property Holdings
W S Atkins	Business assurance: HMIP

Rented Accommodation

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage an increase in the availability of rented accommodation suitable for older people.

Mr. Yeo: The Housing Corporation is now the major provider of new subsidised housing for rent. Its capital programme is set to rise significantly—from £1·1 billion in 1990-91 to over £2 billion in 1993-94.

Both the housing needs indicator, by which the Housing Corporation distributes resources to housing associations, and the generalised needs indicator, by which the annual local authority housing investment programme allocations are made, take into account the housing needs of the elderly.

My Department has recently commissioned an independent study of the housing needs of the elderly, to help review the provision of subsidised specialised housing for elderly people.

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has made, under section 7 of the Disabled Persons Act 1981, on improvements of access provision for people with disabilities, since the Act was first introduced.

Mr. Yeo: No such reports have been made.

As an alternative to implementing section 6 of the Disabled Persons Act 1981, new building regulations were laid before Parliament on 2 April 1985. These became operational in August 1985. They required that new offices, shops, single-storey factories, educational and public buildings should be made accessible to disabled people.

Further building regulations were laid before Parliament on 20 August 1987 recasting these requirements into functional form. At the same time, an approved document giving practical solutions for meeting the access requirements was published.

Public consultation took place earlier this year on proposals to widen the application of access requirements to all storeys in new non-domestic buildings, to certain alterations and extensions, and to introduce provisions aimed at reducing risks to people with impaired sight and helping those with impaired hearing. The results of the consultation exercise are being considered by my Department and the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. It is proposed to lay regulations before Parliament later this year, which will aim further to improve access requirements for disabled people.

Dogs

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet representatives of the RSPCA to discuss a national registration scheme for dogs.

Mr. Baldry: We have regular discussions with the Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society, which includes RSPCA representatives, on matters relating to responsible dog ownership and to the implementation of the package of dog control measures contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. We will introduce the dog control measures next year. They include a duty on local authorities to enforce the requirement that dogs wear a collar and identification tag when in a public place and to ensure that stray dogs are collected up. We believe that the measures will provide a practical and effective solution to the problems caused by irresponsible owners. We remain of the view that registration would be bureaucratic, expensive to operate and ineffective.

Litter

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations from British Rail about provisions for clearing litter under the Environmental Protection Act.

Mr. Baldry: My Department had a number of meetings to discuss the litter provisions with British Rail, during the passage of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 through Parliament. British Rail was represented on the advisory group which drew up the code of practice on litter and refuse. My Department was also in frequent contact with British Rail during the formulation of the Litter (Statutory Undertakers) (Designation and Relevant Land) Order 1991, made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under subsections (6) and (8) of section 86 of the Act.

Noise

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been undertaken by his Department concerning the evaluation of nuisance caused by noise.

Mr. Baldry: During the past five years the following studies have formed part of my Department's environmental noise research programme:

Survey of numbers and types of complaints made to environmental health officers about noise from domestic premises.
Survey of types of noises heard by people in their homes.
Survey of satisfaction with sound insulation in converted flats.

Studies currently taking place within the programme are:

Survey of levels of amplified music in dwellings.
Survey of attitudes to noise.

Proposed studies within the programme are surveys of disturbances caused by industrial noise, low frequency noise and transportation noise.

Ivory

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current policy on the ivory trade.

Mr. Baldry: The Government remain fully committed to maintaining the current ban on commercial trade in ivory for as long as it is necessary to ensure the survival and recovery of elephant populations. We would not support any proposals to permit trade to recommence unless we were fully satisfied that the conditions for a resumption of trade, drawn up at the seventh conference of the parties to the convention on international trade in endangered species (CITES) had been met.

Environmental Policy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the preparation of the guidance to Departments on incorporation of environmental considerations in their policy-making process.

Mr. Baldry: The guide will be published later in the year.

Housing (Elderly People)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the housing needs of elderly people in the north-west.

Mr. Yeo: Both my Department and the Housing Corporation take account of regional needs in their distribution of resources to housing associations and local authorities.

The housing needs indicator, on which the regional distribution of the Housing Corporation's capital funds is based, and the generalised needs index, which the Department uses in making housing investment programme allocations, are statistical indexes of relative housing need made up of a number of indicators, one of which is concerned with "elderly needs". These indexes are regularly reviewed.

On a national basis, we have recently commissioned an independent study of the housing needs of elderly people to help review the provision of subsidised specialised housing for this group. This will provide representative estimates of unmet need on a regional basis.

Environmental Grant Fund

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement on who will receive funding under the new environmental grant fund.

Mr. Trippier: Offers of funding totalling £650,000 have today been made to 36 voluntary organisations for projects which will help take forward the policies set out in our White Paper "This Common Inheritance".

There was an overwhelming response to the new fund. I would like to thank all those who applied for getting this first year of the fund off to such a good start and wish those who were unsuccessful this time well for next year when a total of £1 million will be available.

I am especially glad that the new fund is supporting innovative projects and groups new to environmental work, ranging from a Law Centres Federation project to promote awareness of environmental law, through work on environmental awareness among young people organised by the Girl Guides in the south-west, to a project from the Bat Conservation Trust to help Church authorities with the guests in their belfries.

I am also pleased that we have been able to support projects throughout England, including ways of resolving disputes over domestic noise in Bristol; work with the handicapped in Staffordshire; community projects in east London; and environmental networks in the west midlands and Merseyside.

A list of the groups which have been offered support is as follows:

Age Concern
The Bat Conservation Trust
The Bridle Gate Project
Bristol Recycling Consortium
British Dragonfly Society
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
Community Land and Workspace Services
Council for Environmental Education
The Council for Occupational Standards and Qualifications in Environmental Conservation
Council for the Protection of Rural England
The Environment Council
Farming and Wildlife Trust
Forum for Initiatives in Reparation and Mediation
Friends of the Earth
The Garden History Society
The Girl Guides Association (South West)
Groundwork Foundation (South Leeds Groundwork Trust)
Henry Doubleday Research Association
The Institute of Business Ethics
Kennet and Avon Canal Trust
Law Centres Federation
Marine Conservation Society
Mersey Basin Campaign Voluntary Sector Network
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Neighbourhood Energy Action
Pedestrians' Association
Recycling City Ltd.
The Royal National Institute for the Deaf
Royal Society for Nature Conservation
Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds
Tower Hamlets Environment Trust
The Tree Council
The Victorian Society
Waste Watch
West Midlands Environment Network
Youth Clubs UK

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Information on my Department's investment in improving energy efficiency prior to 1989-90 is not available. Expenditure on energy efficiency measures for 1989-90 is estimated to have totalled £120,000 which in 1990-91 money terms is £130,000. Expenditure for 1990-91 is estimated to be £140,000. These figures exclude energy conservation work carried out by Property Holdings on behalf of other Government Departments.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* A total of eight energy audits of offices and specialised sites in London and the regions carried out by external consultants have been initiated in my Department within the five-year period ending March 1990. Since then the Department's energy management unit has carried out five short in-house energy audits in specialised sites and three lighting surveys have been carried out in regional offices. The majority of recommendations resulting from both major and minor audits have recommended various no-cost or low-cost energy conservation measures. These have been, or are in the process of being, implemented where practicable.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* My Department's energy management unit is staffed by four officials whose total effort on energy management represents an approximate total of 1·5 person years. An additional 0·4 person years is dedicated to energy management in the Building Research Establishment.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much grant aid has been provided for Nicaragua since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The available figures are:

Year	*Total grant aid*	*of which Disaster relief*	*Technical cooperation*	*United Kingdom's attributable share of EC aid*
1979	236	93	142	—
1980	1,757	66	61	1,630
1981	1,201	7	84	1,110
1982	1,139	13	36	1,090
1983	1,114	34	30	1,050
1984	2,549	—	9	2,540
1985	2,196	100	16	2,080
1986	1,286	83	3	1,200
1987	1,780	—	—	1,780
1988	2,740	180	—	2,560
1989	61	61	—	—

In addition, grant expenditure under the joint funding scheme—available only by United Kingdom financial year—was:

	£ thousand
Up to 1985-86	162
1986-87	24
1987-88	58
1988-89	39
1989-90	89
1990-91	223

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what intentions Her Majesty's Government have to aid the Nicaraguan Government in their attempt to strengthen the country's educational system; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are looking into the possibility of providing English language training.

European Development Council

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed at the European Development Council on 27 May.

Mrs. Chalker: We discussed a number of important issues, including human rights, democracy and development and tropical forests. We adopted resolutions on non-governmental organisations and counterpart funds. We also reviewed the special programme of food aid to Africa, during which I announced an additional 60,000 tonnes of food aid for Africa at an estimated cost of £16·5 million. This was widely welcomed by my fellow Ministers and by the Commission.

Biological Diversity

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government has taken to fulfil the commitment given in the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", in September 1990 to do more to conserve biological diversity in developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: On 5 June—World Environment Day—I published "Biological Diversity and Developing Countries: Issues and Options", which summarises the ODA strategic studies announced in "This Common Inheritance". The document sets out a range of further measures which we will take. I have placed copies of the document in the Libraries.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nicaragua

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government intend to re-establish the British Council in Managua, Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British Council has no plans to open an office in Managua.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to improve diplomatic relations with the Nicaraguan Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We enjoy close and friendly relations with the Government of Nicaragua. I received Sr. Enrique Dreyfus, the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister, when he visited the United Kingdom last December and we held further talks in March when I visited Nicaragua to attend the San José VII meeting of EC and central American Foreign Ministers. The visit also enabled me to visit some of the projects carried out under our bilateral aid programme.

Somaliland

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government plans to establish diplomatic relations with the Somaliland Republic.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no plans to do so.

PHARE Programme

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what moneys are being made available by the United Kingdom and channelled through the PHARE—Poland and Hungary Assistance for Economic Restructuring—programme for

the purpose of sending specialist advisers selected and approved by the west to provide information, advice and technical assistance to eastern European countries;

(2) how much money is being devoted under the PHARE programme for direct use in the creation of an infrastructure to support the development of democracy.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The EC's PHARE programme committed some 500 mecu in 1990 and is worth 850 mecu in 1991 and 1 billion ecu in 1992. Our contribution is some 18 per cent., or approximately £63 million, £107 million and £126 million respectively. The PHARE programme promotes economic restructuring in the countries of central and eastern Europe thereby underpinning the newly created democracies. The programme includes the financing of western specialist advisers in these countries, and training in member states.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions the United Kingdom Government impose on the use of moneys under the PHARE programme in terms of the type of end use to which resources can be applied or as to locations from which services can be brought in.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The operation of the PHARE programme is governed by European Community regulations. The British Government are represented on a management committee which oversees disbursements and considers the Commission's proposals. The regulations stipulate that only EC member states and the countries of central and eastern Europe may tender to provide services for projects wholly financed by the PHARE programme.

Algeria

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the status of the Algerian nuclear programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Algeria possesses one working nuclear research reactor which has been placed under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. We understand that with Chinese co-operation Algeria is building a second reactor at Ain Oussera. At a press conference on 29 April a spokesman for the Algerian Ministry of Scientific Research said that this second reactor was for research purposes and the production of radio-isotopes, and Algeria intended to submit it to IAEA inspection. Chinese spokesmen have publicly confirmed this. We welcome these assurances, and hope the Algerian Government will invite the IAEA to inspect the facility as soon as possible.

Disarmament

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent visit to the United Kingdom of Soviet military inspectors under the intermediate nuclear forces agreement verification protocols; and what has been the cost to date of implementation of the 1987 intermediate nuclear forces agreement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most recent visit to the United Kingdom by soviet inspectors under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty took place on 28 May 1991; RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth were inspected. Treaty implementation costs in addition to the normal operating costs of the MOD are estimated to have been less than £40,000 since the treaty came into force.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation the United Kingdom had at the United Nations conference on disarmament issues; and whether his Department will be assisting in the distribution of material arising from the conference.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the United Nations conference on disarmament issues which took place in Kyoto, Japan from 27-30 May. A senior official of the Ministry of Defence attended, in a personal capacity. We have taken careful note of his report of the discussions at the conference. The public distribution of material arising out of the conference is a matter for the United Nations.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to provide help to Sierra Leone in dealing with intruders along its frontiers.

Mrs. Chalker: The Sierra Leone Government have made a non-specific request for military aid to deal with intruders from Liberia to which we are responding.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will provide details of the Sierra Leone request for aid in dealing with Liberian intruders along its frontiers.

Mrs. Chalker: We are supplying a quantity of non-lethal defence equipment to the Sierra Leone army.

Non-Government Organisations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 23 May, *Official Report*, column 579, to the hon. Member for Newport, West on the meeting of 14 May with non-government organisations, if he will list the matters raised in rank order to the proportion of time spent on them, without making direct reference to those parties who initiated the discussions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The discussions at this meeting were off the record. It would not be appropriate to specify how much time was devoted to each of the many topics raised.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Marina Services

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to refer Marina Services to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: The Secretary of State and I are concerned about the allegations we have heard of possible anti-competitive practices in marinas on the south coast. We have asked the Director General of Fair Trading to look into the allegations and see what the evidence shows. We are still considering this matter.

The Secretary of State has powers to refer the supply of marina services to the Monopolies and Mergers

Commission and would use these powers if evidence emerged which justified a reference. Any evidence of monopoly abuse or anti-competitive practices to provide the basis for a reference should be brought to the attention of the Director General.

Emergency Telephone Service

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure a comprehensive emergency telephone service under the Government's policy for telecommunications.

Mr. Redwood: All public telecommunications operators including BT, Mercury Communications and the two cellular operators, Cellnet and Racal-Vodafone, are obliged under their respective operating licences to provide an emergency call service to the public free of charge—the "999" service—enabling them to notify emergency organisations (police, fire and ambulance services) of emergencies.

Exit Strategies

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) further to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *39*, on exit strategies, if he will list how much of the £1 million annually for the support of projects is for *(a)* salaries and *(b)* administration in each of the task forces;

(2) if the £1 million is for capital projects or is minus the salaries, rent and administration of the task forces themselves.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 5 June 1991]:* The quoted figure of about £1 million per annum refers to project expenditure alone; this may be capital expenditure, project running costs (including salaries and administration), or both.

The task forces' own running costs of salaries, rent, administration and associated expenditure are not included.

Textiles

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to include all children's clothing in legislation covering fire retardant materials in the same degree as presently covers furniture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 5 June 1991]:* No. It would not be reasonable for clothing to meet fire resistance requirements to the same degree applicable to the covers of upholstered furniture. Such fire resistant treatments are not suitable for most of the lightweight fabrics used in summerwear, and in the limited range of fabrics where it might be possible the comfort of the garment would be severely affected.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to extend existing regulations under consumer protection legislation to include shell suits and similar fashion wear in respect of fire resistant materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 5 June 1991]:* We have no present plans to extend the scope of the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations to daywear garments for children. However, section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, the general safety requirement, makes it an offence to supply consumer goods, including articles of clothing, that are not reasonably safe having regard to all the circumstances.

My Department has recently advised the British Standards Institution of its support for the development of a flammability specification that could be applied to children's daywear garments. In the interim, the Department is supporting the enforcement authorities in their discussions with the clothing industry on a voluntary scheme for flammability labelling of childrenswear. We shall continue to monitor developments closely.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many universities have applied to be renamed as polytechnics.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None, yet.

Veterinary Schools

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when he expects the Universities Funding Council to announce a decision on capital grants to veterinary schools;

(2) what representations he has received from veterinary schools for capital grants to develop the student facilities; and if he will discuss such grants with the Universities Funding Council.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Universities Funding Council's capital allocations for 1991-92 were set out in circular letter 7/91, a copy of which is in the Library. My right hon. and learned Friend has not received any representations from veterinary schools on the allocations; nor would he expect to do so since, under the Education Reform Act 1988, it is for the UFC to determine the distribution of funding between individual institutions.

Data Protection (Schools)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools there are in the United Kingdom; what proportion have computers used for administrative purposes; what steps he has taken to satisfy himself about the propriety of personal data held by the governors, head teachers and parent teachers' associations on these computers; whether he has held meetings with local authority associations about the cost of registration of schools under the Data Protection Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The number of schools in the United Kingdom is 34,958. Information is not available on the number of schools with computers used for administrative purposes. The control and use of personal data by data users is a matter for the office of the Data Protection Registrar. No meetings have so far been held with local authority associations specifically to discuss the cost of registration, but draft guidance for schools on data protection was circulated widely to the associations and others at the end of October 1990. Discussions are still taking place with the office of the Data Protection Registrar on the scope of registration by schools and guidance will be issued when these are complete.

List 99

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the personal information associated with List 99 is not kept on computer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The information held in relation to a decision by my right hon. and learned Friend to exclude a person from teaching or work with children or young persons on grounds of misconduct and add his or her name to List 99 could not easily be converted to a computer record.

Further Education

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many persons aged 19 years have followed non-advanced education courses in schools and colleges in the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The number of full or part-time students aged 19 years in schools and on further education courses in publicly funded colleges is as follows:

Thousands

	Schools	*Further education*	*Total*
1985-86	[1]3	89	92
1986-87	3	88	90
1987-88	3	83	85
1988-89	3	82	85
1989-90	3	82	86

[1] Includes adults in Special Schools.

Notes:
Numbers may not add to total because of rounding.
Age is at 31 August at the start of the academic year.
Adult Education Centres have been excluded.

Schools Reorganisation

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of each proposal for a reorganisation or closure of schools involving the transfer of sixth form provision to *(a)* a sixth form college or *(b)* a further education or tertiary college, with name of area, and local education authority and colleges concerned, the approximate number of pupil/students involved, the decision of the Secretary of State, and date, for each year since 1979 for which data are available.

Mr. Eggar: The full information requested could be provided only at a disproportionate cost. Those proposals decided by the Secretary of State which involved the establishment of tertiary or sixth form colleges from 1984 onwards include the following:

Secondary Reorganisation proposals involving the establishment of Tertiary Colleges

Proposal Date	*LEA*	*Decision Made*	*Decision Date*
13 July 1984	Staffordshire	Approved	15 February 1985
15 November 1984	Gloucestershire	Rejected	24 March 1986
30 November 1984 (also Sixth Form College)	Gloucestershire	Rejected	24 March 1986
9 January 1985 (also Sixth Form College)	Wolverhampton	Rejected	25 November 1985
22 April 1985	Bury	Approved	15 April 1986
6 September 1985	Oxfordshire	Approved	17 September 1986
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Approved[1]	3 November 1986
14 October 1985	South Tyneside	Approved	9 October 1986
24 October 1985	Sheffield	Approved[1]	23 December 1986
16 May 1986	Essex	Approved	27 October 1987
30 May 1986	Avon	Rejected	27 January 1987
23 October 1986	Dudley	Rejected	5 August 1987
22 January 1987	ILEA	Rejected	27 November 1987
23 January 1987	Derbyshire	Approved[1]	30 November 1987
5 March 1987	Northamptonshire	Approved	3 December 1987
23 September 1987	Gloucestershire	Rejected	20 May 1988
18 March 1988	Shropshire	Approved	22 March 1989
6 April 1988	Cornwall	Approved[1]	25 May 1989
13 April 1988	Rochdale	Approved[1]	28 July 1989
29 April 1988	Essex	Approved[1]	23 October 1989
29 April 1988	Essex	Approved[1]	30 January 1990
5 May 1988	Wirral	Rejected	21 December 1988
1 June 1988	Knowsley	Approved[1]	16 June 1989
9 June 1988	Sefton	Approved[1]	10 May 1989
17 June 1988	Derbyshire	Approved[1]	13 October 1989
15 July 1988	Derbyshire	Approved	25 August 1989
7 April 1989	Barnsley	Approved[1]	7 December 1989

Secondary Reorganisation proposals involving the establishment of Sixth Form Colleges

Proposal Date	*LEA*	*Decision Made*	*Decision Date*
5 April 1984	Essex	Approved	4 April 1985
10 September 1984	Avon	Rejected	9 May 1986
14 September 1984	Waltham Forest	Approved	28 June 1985
19 April 1985	Cumbria	Rejected	25 February 1986
30 January 1986	Stockport	Approved	2 December 1986
6 February 1986	St Helens	Approved	22 October 1986
24 April 1986	Hampshire	Approved	6 November 1986
29 October 1986	Wirral	Approved	14 September 1987
12 February 1987	Cheshire	Rejected	19 January 1988

Proposal Date	LEA	Decision Made	Decision Date
9 March 1987	Shropshire	Approved	10 December 1987
12 June 1987	Merton	[1]Approved	11 July 1988
18 June 1987	Humberside	Approved	6 January 1988
17 July 1987	Lancashire	Approved	23 June 1988
22 July 1987	Hampshire	[1]Approved	23 May 1988
18 September 1987	Leeds	Approved	28 June 1988
22 April 1988	ILEA	Approved	15 February 1989
27 May 1988	Havering	[1]Approved	14 August 1989
20 April 1989	Newham	[1]Approved	26 April 1990
1 May 1990	Oldham	[1]Approved	3 December 1990

[1] Proposals approved with modification

Students

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the numbers and percentage of the total of students aged 16 to 18 years in full-time education in *(a)* school sixth forms, *(b)* sixth form colleges and *(c)* further education, including tertiary, colleges for each year since 1979 for which data are available.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Full-time 16 to 18-year-olds

	Further education		Sixth form colleges		Other schools[1]		Total	
	Number (000)	Percentage	Number (000)	Percentage	Number (000)	Percentage	Number (000)	Percentage
1978-80	237	40·9	48	8·3	294	50·8	579	100
1980-81	228	37·5	54	8·8	327	53·7	609	100
1981-82	262	38·9	60	8·8	353	52·3	675	100
1982-83	294	41·2	64	8·9	355	49·8	712	100
1983-84	279	41·1	62	9·1	338	49·8	679	100
1984-85	271	41·4	61	9·3	323	49·3	656	100
1985-86	274	42·0	64	9·7	315	48·2	652	100
1986-87	272	42·6	63	9·8	304	47·6	639	100
1987-88	282	43·3	62	9·5	308	47·2	652	100
1988-89	282	42·0	70	10·5	319	47·5	671	100
1989-90	302	43·1	74	10·6	324	46·3	699	100

[1] The data for "other schools" are all 16 to 18-year-olds in schools (including special schools), whether or not they are in the sixth form. Data for sixth form students aged 16 to 18 are not available centrally.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the numbers of *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* full-time equivalent students in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics, (iii) other higher education institutions and (iv) (i) plus (ii) plus (iii), for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information is given in the table:

Higher education full-time and part-time students in Great Britain

Thousands

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Universities											
Full-time	292·7	298·7	300·2	295·4	291·7	290·6	295·5	301·3	305·4	317·6	334·5
Part-time	30·0	32·0	33·2	33·5	34·6	36·0	37·1	39·4	40·7	44·5	47·9
Full-time equivalent	303·2	309·9	311·8	307·1	303·8	303·2	308·5	315·1	319·6	333·2	351·3
Polytechnics and colleges											
Full-time	217·4	221·7	241·3	257·7	273·4	282·7	288·0	294·7	303·3	308·7	335·9
Part-time	168·1	181·1	185·8	188·5	195·3	195·1	210·0	228·4	232·7	247·5	259·4
Full-time equivalent	276·2	284·5	306·3	323·7	341·8	351·0	361·5	374·6	384·7	395·3	426·7
All students											
Full-time	510·1	520·4	541·5	553·1	565·1	573·3	583·5	596·1	608·7	626·3	670·4
Part-time	198·1	213·1	219·0	222·0	229·9	231·1	247·1	267·8	273·4	292·0	307·3
Full-time equivalent	579·4	594·4	618·1	630·8	645·6	654·2	670·0	689·7	704·3	728·5	778·0

Sources: Universities Statistical Record.
Further Education Statistical Record.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the total numbers of full-time equivalent students in higher education aged 18 to 21 years in each year since 1979; and what percentage of the same age group they represented.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is given in the table:

Home undergraduate students on first year courses of higher education—aged under 21

	Academic years										
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Full-time	117·4	123·3	130·2	136·4	135·4	137·9	136·8	136·6	138·6	141·2	157·8
Part-time	29·6	35·6	36·7	35·3	33·6	32·8	33·0	32·5	34·4	35·8	35·9
Full-time equivalent	127·8	135·8	143·0	148·8	147·2	149·4	148·4	148·0	150·7	153·8	170·4
As percentage of 18 and 19-year-old population	14·6	15·2	15·6	15·8	15·6	16·3	16·6	16·8	17·4	18·1	20·2

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the proportion of (i) 16-year-olds, (ii) 17-year-olds, (iii) 18-year-olds and (iv) 16 to 18-year-olds in receipt of *(a)* full-time education, *(b)* full-time training, *(c)* *(a)* plus *(b)*, *(d)* part-time training and *(e)* a full-time or part-time education or training, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested for the academic years 1978-79 to 1988-89 is given in the Department's statistical bulletins 2/87, 9/90, copies of which are in the Library (these show part-time education for 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84, 1987-88, 1988-89). Figures for 1989-90 will be published in a new statistical bulletin 13/91 shortly and are as follows:

	Percentage of population in:				
Age	*Full-time education (excluding YTS)*	*YTS*	*Full-time education and YTS*	*Part-time education*	*Total full-time and part-time education and YTS*
16	53	22	75	11	86
17	38	20	59	11	70
18	21	2	23	16	38
16–18	37	14	51	13	64

Age as at 31 August at the start of the academic year.
Columns may not add up to totals because of rounding.

Examinations

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the number of entries to and passes in the advanced supplementary level and advanced level examinations for each year since the introduction of AS-level; and what percentage the number of entries to, and passes in AS-level was of the number of entries to and passes in A-level in the same years.

Mr. Eggar: The numbers of leavers attempting at least one AS examination as a proportion of those who attempted A-level examinations was 5·3 per cent. and for passes the proportion was 3·6 per cent.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to collect data on the number of national vocational qualifications levels 2 and 3, or equivalent qualifications or ones of a similar standard obtained by 16 to 19-year-olds in all types of institution and training.

Mr. Eggar: We are undertaking a pilot survey, jointly with the Employment Department, of information held by the main bodies responsible for awarding vocational qualifications. The aim is to extend the survey to cover virtually all vocational qualifications. We will also be consulting shortly about proposals for FE colleges to publish their results and send copies to the Department.

Recreation and Sports

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to promote training and educational opportunities in recreation and sports for ethnic minorities.

Mr. Atkins: We have made physical education a foundation subject in the national curriculum for all pupils aged five to 16, including those from ethnic minorities. In addition, the Sports Council, which this Department funds, is chairing the Industry Lead Body for Sport and Recreation which is working to produce a structure of national vocational qualifications in the area of sport and recreation. These will be delivered on an equal opportunity basis.

Schools Inspectorate

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn on 8 May 1991 at column *469*, how long the thorough internal review of the structure and role of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools will take; whether and when its conclusions will be published; and whether there will be a period of public consultation before decisions on the review are made.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The internal review got under way immediately following my reply of 8 May 1991 at column *469* to the hon. Member. I have asked it to report at the beginning of July. I do not expect to publish the review itself which will take the form of confidential advice to Ministers. I shall wish to consider how to act on the conclusions of the review once I have received them.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will be inviting evidence from outside his Department in the course of the review of the structure and role of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The review team will not formally invite or receive evidence. However, the team is seeking views from a wide range of people and bodies within the education world and beyond it.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the names, grades and posts of those conducting the internal review of the structure and role of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The internal review is being conducted by a team consisting of three officials in the Department and a member of the inspectorate. Their grades are as follows:

Assistant Secretary—DES-team leader
Staff Inspector—HMI
Higher Executive Officer (Development)—DES
Personal Secretary—DES

Following normal practice, I do not intend to disclose the names of individual officials who are preparing advice for Ministers.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn on 8 May 1991, at column *469*, whether, under any new arrangements for the inspection of the education service, it is his intention that the head of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools should continue to publish annual reports independent of, and unamended by, Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I would expect any inspectorate to be free to publish annual reports independent of and unamended by Ministers. I am looking to the review to offer advice on this and any other related matter if the team wishes but I have no complaints about the present arrangements for HMI so far as reporting is concerned.

Government Scientists

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what involvement Government-employed scientists have had with the system for the analysis research and training programme operated by the international geosphere-biosphere programme of the International Council of Scientific Users.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No Government-employed scientist has been involved with the international geosphere-biosphere programme global change system analysis research and training (START) initiative, but a member of staff of the Natural Environment Research Council attended, in a personal capacity, the workshop in Bellagio, Italy at which the main objectives and the proposed implementation strategy of START were established.

HEALTH

Cancer

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table indicating the death rate from cancer for the United Kingdom and for each of the other members of the European Community.

Mr. Dorrell: A table listing death rates from malignant neoplasms, all ages for members of the European Community follows. The most recent data available for Spain is 1985, and for Belgium 1986. Data for 1987 are the latest available for all other members, with the exception of the United Kingdom, which is 1989. 1987 data for the United Kingdom are however also provided for comparison purposes.

Deaths from Malignant Neoplasms

Country	*Year*	*Rate per 1000 population*
Spain[1]	1985	1·72
Belgium[2]	1986	2·24
Denmark[1]	1987	2·87
Federal Republic of Germany[1]	1987	2·73
France[1]	1987	2·43
Greece[1]	1987	1·86
Ireland[1]	1987	1·95
Italy[1]	1987	2·44
Luxemborg[1]	1987	2·76
Netherlands[1]	1987	2·39
Portugal[1]	1987	1·64
United Kingdom[3]	1987	2·80
United Kingdom[3]	1989	2·51

[1] *Source:* Eurostat.
[2] *Source:* WHO Statistics Annual.
[3] *Source:* OPCS.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had from City hospital, Nottingham regarding NHS trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: An application for NHS trust status from April 1992 has been received from the City hospital, Nottingham and is currently the subject of a three-month public consultation exercise conducted by Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations has he had from University hospital, Queens medical centre, Nottingham regarding NHS trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The University hospital, Queens medical centre, Nottingham expressed an interest in becoming an NHS trust from 1 April 1992. The unit subsequently decided to defer its application.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his policy on answering written parliamentary questions relating to NHS hospital trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) on 30 October 1990 at column *445*.

Low Income

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will consider extending the valid period of certificates issued under the health benefits low-income scheme from six to 12 months;

(2) if he will introduce a formal right of appeal for late claims for refunds of costs incurred for dental, optical and prescription charges.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 22 May, column *530*, if he will make a statement on the remit of the review of the health benefits low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The review of the low income scheme will be wide-ranging. It will examine all aspects of the administration of the NHS low income scheme, particularly the amount of information intending claimants are asked to provide, the adequacy of existing forms, leaflets and publicity, and current procedures for assessing entitlement under the scheme. In addition, we shall examine current exemption arrangements, including the present six-month period for which certificates are valid, the time limits for obtaining refunds for charges incurred and the scope for improving existing review arrangements.

As my earlier reply made clear we aim to produce proposals for change by the end of 1991.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has conducted to establish that glasses are available at a cost not exceeding the full value of vouchers issued under the low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department undertakes surveys each autumn to monitor the effectiveness of the voucher scheme.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on the health benefits low income scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently received a report from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) concerning the NHS low income scheme. This detailed report is most welcome and particularly timely in light of the Department's review of this scheme. As the review is taken forward officials will be discussing with NACAB the issues and recommendations which they have made.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will extend the period during which a person may apply for a refund of dental and optical charges under the health benefits low income scheme;

(2) if his review of the health benefits low income scheme will examine the cost-effectiveness of replacing the health benefits low income scheme by transferring the costs to the national insurance contribution scheme.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve the provision of leaflets and claim forms for the health benefits low income scheme in languages other than English.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Present arrangements already allow for refunds of most dental and optical charges to be made up to one month after payment of the charge and beyond that time if there is good cause for the claim being delayed. The review of the NHS low income scheme will provide a fresh opportunity for the question of time limits for refunds to be reconsidered.

Government policy on NHS charges are based primarily on the principle that those who can afford to make a contribution should do so, whilst those who have difficulty in paying the charges should be protected. There are no plans to change this policy.

The provision of leaflets in languages other than English will be considered as part of a more general examination of the low income forms and leaflets.

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now reply to the letter sent to his Department on 9 April by the hon. Member for Gower regarding a constituent resident in Mumbles, Swansea.

Mr. Dorrell: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State replied yesterday.

HIV

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has given to inquiries from legal representatives of patients who have been infected with HIV through national health service blood transfusions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have placed in the Library a copy of a reply which I have sent to Mr. Graham Ross of J. Keith Park and Co.

General Practitioners

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners in Great Britain bought added years (old style) pension rights in 1975; how many of those general practitioners were under 43 years old in 1972; what were the figures for general practitioners aged under 44 years in steps of £500 based on average updated earnings to October 1972; and how many of the general practitioners are still paying for the added years.

Mr. Dorrell: In England and Wales, approximately 30,000 general medical and dental practitioners took advantage of the NHS pension schemes (old style) added years provisions. The majority of these have since retired with benefits from the scheme.

Further information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about parallel schemes in Northern Ireland and Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Scotland.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to issue guidance to general practitioner fundholders on how they should respond to inquiries from hon. Members representing their area on matters of policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no plans to do so. If an hon. Member has a concern about the activities of a GP fundholder I would suggest he raises it with the relevant family health services authority.

Rabies

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list incidents of rabies in humans recorded in Britain in each year since 1970.

Mr. Dorrell: Cases reported were as follows:

	Number
1975	2
1976	1
1977	2
1978	1
1981	1
1986	1
1987	1
1988	2

No cases were reported in the remaining 13 years between 1970 and 1990 inclusive.

Health Benefits Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what obligation there is on opticians and dentists to provide information and advice on claiming under the health benefits low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) Regulations 1986 require opticians to display prominently a notice showing possible entitlement to vouchers under the low income scheme. Dentists are required by their terms of service (set out in the National Health Service (General Dental Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1990) to display prominently a notice, indicating NHS charges which are payable under general dental services and entitlement to exemption from and remission of NHS charges.

Mobility Needs

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the mobility needs of adults with arthritic and rheumatic diseases.

Mr. Dorrell: It is a matter for health authorities to assess the need for health care of their resident populations including help with mobility, and to make appropriate provision. Individual assessment is a matter for clinical judgment. Mobility allowance is also available, from the Department of Social Security, to assist with long-range mobility needs.

Local Authority Service Provision

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what areas of local authority service provision for which he has responsibility payments are required to be made to individuals who are not employees *(a)* in the form of a grant or one-off payment and *(b)* on receipt of paid invoices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no requirement on local authorities to make any such payments.

Private Ambulance Services

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what conditions govern the issuing of operative licences to the proprietors of private ambulance services;

(2) if the applicants for licences to operate private ambulance services are vetted for details of previous criminal convictions.

Mr. Dorrell: Private ambulance services are not subject to any vetting or licensing procedures.

Preventive Health Care

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he plans to include sections on maternal, child and mental health in the imminent Green Paper on preventive health care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The health of pregnant women, infants and children and mental health, together with suggested objectives and targets, is discussed in the Green Paper "Health of the Nation" which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published on 4 June.

Social Services

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision his Department has made to each county for social services *(a)* in 1991-92 and *(b)* the previous year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Provision for the main part of personal social services revenue expenditure is determined through standard spending assessments. Figures for the English counties for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are shown in the DOE standard spending assessment handbooks for 1990-91 and 1991-92 respectively, copies of which are in the Library.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many copies of his departmental report No. 39 on nuclear accident countermeasures have been printed; at what cost; and to whom copies have been distributed.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 1,500 copies of this report were printed. The costs of printing and publishing were borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which I understand aims to recover them from sales revenue.

Copies have been distributed to: regional and district health authorities; family health services authorities; local authority county emergency planning officers; members of the United Kingdom working group on stable iodine prophylaxis; and Government Departments with responsibilities for nuclear emergency planning. A copy is also available in the Library.

Disability

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of adults is visually impaired;

(2) what percentage of the population has impaired hearing;

(3) what percentage of disabled people is receiving 24-hour help.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the prevalence of different types of disability, and such information as is available centrally about the proportion of disabled people who receive 24-hour help, is given in the reports published in 1988-89 in the survey of disability carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of adults are registered as disabled in Britain.

Mr. Dorrell: At 31 March 1990, approximately 3·2 per cent. of people aged 16 years and over were registered with local authority social services departments in England as being physically disabled. Equivalent figures relating to Wales and Scotland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland.

Residential Care

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will increase the number of residential care places in Britain.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Decisions about the amount of residential care provision required for people seeking public financial support must be based on the assessment by each social services authority of the needs of the population it serves.

Moves made under our community care policy towards increasing the amount and range of day and domiciliary services enable a greater proportion of people to remain in their own homes.

Social Work

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many social worker posts remained unfilled in local authorities in England and Wales on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. Estimates of the number of full-time vacancies among field workers will be included in the "Social Services Employment Survey", due to be published shortly by the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Local Government Management Board, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of cases referred to local authority social services in England and Wales that remained unallocated on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

WALES

Waste Disposal

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the projected investment costs forecast to be incurred in 1991-92 and 1992-93 for landfill sites by each listed waste disposal authority in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally. This is a matter for the waste disposal authorities.

Teachers

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of women head teachers in each local education authority in Wales in *(a)* primary schools in 1985 and 1990 and *(b)* secondary schools in 1985 and 1990.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

(a) Primary Schools

	1984-85	*1990-91*
Clwyd	80	77
Dyfed	114	133
Gwent	110	112
Gwynedd	42	48
Mid Glamorgan	139	153
Powys	33	37
South Glamorgan	74	75
West Glamorgan	64	65
Wales	656	700

(b) Secondary Schools

	1984-85	*1990-91*
Clwyd	0	2
Dyfed	0	0
Gwent	1	4
Gwynedd	1	1
Mid Glamorgan	3	4
Powys	0	0
South Glamorgan	2	4
West Glamorgan	2	1
Wales	9	16

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the amount of capital invested on landfill sites in Wales by each waste disposal authority in Wales since 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on capital invested on landfill sites is not available centrally. However, the figures for capital spending on refuse disposal, which includes landfill, are given in the table.

Gross capital expenditure on refuse disposal 1984-85 to 1989-90[1]

District	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Alyn and Deeside	71	41	33	73	81	51
Colwyn	26	38	69	2	8	0
Delyn	0	0	154	341	24	5
Glyndwr	33	16	3	64	99	83
Rhuddlan	46	68	0	22	28	37
Wrexham Maelor	197	170	0	100	225	116
Carmarthen	123	14	83	25	18	31
Ceredigion	12	29	77	57	163	315
Dinefwr	18	25	5	0	1	53
Llanelli	9	37	24	51	52	31
Preseli Pembrokeshire	217	404	36	20	21	36
South Pembrokeshire	82	38	125	95	28	0

District	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Blaenau Gwent	95	71	91	155	11	10
Islwyn	45	56	106	24	0	43
Monmouth	218	47	201	47	44	55
Newport	33	129	65	184	83	615
Torfaen	86	17	0	0	0	0
Aberconwy	40	0	0	0	0	0
Arfon	48	164	6	4	10	9
Dwyfor	287	1,052	426	68	30	32
Meirionnydd	59	0	73	24	109	53
Ynys Môn	48	727	769	402	197	38
Cynon Valley	94	38	26	228	90	50
Merthyr Tydfil	0	1	105	127	1	11
Ogwr	0	44	0	16	0	0
Rhondda	71	1,284	2,365	525	192	124
Rhymney Valley	56	64	132	178	344	90
Taff-Ely	1	73	112	205	241	577
Brecknock	21	77	15	16	32	0
Montgomeryshire	7	38	47	34	84	187
Radnorshire	67	18	9	9	90	162
Cardiff	187	399	729	166	173	65
Vale of Glamorgan	36	17	43	4	21	0
Lliw Valley	15	33	32	37	13	22
Neath	48	152	160	170	161	74
Port Talbot	0	11	0	0	0	0
Swansea	186	259	372	474	258	490
Total Wales	2,581	5,650	6,492	3,947	2,932	3,465

[1] Capital outturn returns were revised in 1986-87 and hence data for previous years are not strictly comparable.

Disability

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the organisations representing disabled people in Wales which have contacted his Department; and on how many occasions since 1987 he has met each such organisation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Welsh Office maintains close contact with the major all-Wales organisations representing people with physical or sensory disabilities or mental handicaps.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and his ministerial colleagues meet such organisations from time to time. For example, my right hon. Friend formally opened the new regional headquarters of the Spastics Society in Cardiff on 16 January this year; and in June last year, my predecessor formally opened the new offices of the Wales Council for the Deaf.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the number of disabled people in Wales, by category; and if he will publish his latest estimate.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The latest available wide-ranging information on the incidence of physical and sensory disability is contained in the reports of the OPCS surveys published in 1988-89. These showed that 16·4 per cent. of adults and 3·1 per cent. of children in Wales have such disabilities, the proportions in the upper severity categories 6 to 10 being 6 per cent. of adults (the highest in the United Kingdom) and 2 per cent. of children (equal highest in the United Kingdom).

The latest available figures show that in 1989-90 there were 10,406 people in Wales known to have serious mental handicaps.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policies he has initiated since 1987 to assist people with disabilities in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On 8 May 1990 the Welsh Office issued a circular giving comprehensive guidance to health and local authorities on good practice in the development and delivery of services for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities. Authorities are expected to have regard to that advice in preparing their local strategies for health and their social care plans, which in Wales are being jointly prepared by all the statutory and voluntary agencies concerned.

We have introduced this year a new grant scheme, unique to Wales, to promote the development of more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and for people with physical or sensory disabilities.

The all-Wales mental handicap strategy has been in place since March 1983. We are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the strategy and propose shortly to publish for consultation our provisional conclusions on the framework for service development from April 1993.

Deafness

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take in order to ensure a greater supply of teachers of the deaf in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We are seeking to increase the number of teachers in Wales who are qualified to meet the educational needs of deaf pupils through a programme of in-service training. Over £100,000 has been approved by my Department for this purpose this year through the grants for education support and training programme.

More generally, the recently introduced criteria for the approval of initial teachers training courses requires that, on completion of their course, students should have developed the capacity to identify pupils with special educational needs or with learning difficulties and to understand the ways in which the potential of such pupils can be developed.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he proposes to help deaf children in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Children Act 1989, to be implemented on 14 October 1991, lays a general duty on local social services authorities to promote the welfare of children who are in need by providing an appropriate range and level of services. Section 17 of the Act defines children in need so as to include deaf children. By virtue of schedule 2 to the Act, services to such children should be designed to minimise the effect of their disability and give them the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible. Guidance on these provisions is contained in chapter 2 of the publication "The Children Act 1989: Guidance and Regulations—Volume 2 Family Support, Day Care and Educational Provision for Young Children" (HMSO 1991), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Further guidance is in preparation which will give advice to local authorities on the discharge of their duty to children with disabilities.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to increase the number of speech therapists in Wales;

(2) how many speech therapy posts in Wales are currently unfilled.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the current number of unfilled speech therapy posts in Wales is not held centrally. However, the results of the 1990 annual manpower resource planning (MRP) exercise carried out by Welsh district health authorities indicated a shortage of 27 speech therapists across Wales as at September 1989.

The extent and location of training provision for speech therapy in Wales is being considered along with that for other health care professions in the light of the manpower resource planning results and the new arrangements to be introduced for the planning and funding of certain pre-registration education and training at the all-Wales level.

In the short term, speech therapy shortages are being addressed by my Department through the sponsorship of students. As a result of Welsh Office funding in 1990 and 1991 an additional 10 speech therapy students are being sponsored by Welsh health authorities on the understanding that they work for at least two years in Wales on completion of their training.

Health Boards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual remuneration of *(a)* health authority chairman and *(b)* health board members in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Health authority chairmen are remunerated at different rates. These are currently as follows:

Band 1—£17,610 per annum
Applicable to Clwyd, Gwent, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan and West Glamorgan Health Authorities.

Band 2—£15,659 per annum
Applicable to East Dyfed and Gwynedd Health Authorities.

Band 3—£13,812 per annum
Applicable to Pembrokeshire and Powys Health Authorities.

All non-executive health authority members receive remuneration of £5,000 per annum. Executive members receive their appropriate NHS salaries.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria he has adopted for appointment to health boards in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Members are appointed on the strength of the skills and experience they can bring to an authority's work.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those hospitals whose managements he has written to, or spoken to, about acquisition of hospital trust status.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The director of the national health service in Wales has written to all managers of health service units explaining Ministers' view that although national health service trusts are seen as the natural organisational model for hospitals and other units providing health care, the decision on whether to seek self-governing status is a matter for individual units, taking account of local circumstances and enthusiasm.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which hospitals in Wales are eligible for hospital trust status.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Any hospital or other health service unit actively providing patient care may apply to become a national health service trust. This would include hospitals, community-based services (whether alone or together with hospitals) and ambulance services.

Health Service Grading

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurses there are in each health authority area in Wales with regrading appeals outstanding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The numbers of regrading appeals outstanding at the three different levels are as shown in the following table:

Health authority	*Outstanding appeals at:* *District level*	*Regional (all-Wales) level*	*National (negotiating council) level*
Clwyd	75	117	11
East Dyfed	229	66	5
Gwent	282	287	2
Gwynedd	—	166	36
Mid Glamorgan	616	206	—
Pembrokeshire	—	55	—
Powys	—	161	2
South Glamorgan	310	181	17
West Glamorgan	—	103	22

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on 26 March 1991, and to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 28 March 1991.

Aldbourne Associates

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *571*, what is the total value of the housing consultancy work given to Aldbourne Associates on *(a)* the priority estates project and *(b)* housing options for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information for the years prior to 1989-90 cannot, within the time available, be provided in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman in due course.

It is not possible to attribute every payment made to Aldbourne Associates in 1989-90. 1990-91 and 1991-92 precisely to PEP or to HOW. Since its launch in January 1990, housing options Wales has subsumed the priority estates project programme. It is estimated that payments totalling approximately £98,000 can reasonably be attributed to elements of HOW that are distinct from previous work on PEP. The residue of the sums referred to in the previous answer includes payments made in respect of PEP, and of the Department's alternatives for social housing (ASH) programme (also now subsumed within HOW). Payments readily attributable to ASH for these years total some £27,000.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *571*, whether Aldbourne Associates' contract was awarded subsequent to an open tender.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *571*, when Aldbourne Associate's main contract was awarded; what length of time it was scheduled to cover; and what subsequent ancillary contracts were awarded.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The initial contract (with Miss C. Lesley Andrews, rather than with Aldbourne Associates Ltd.) was made in September 1983, in respect of work to be completed by 31 March 1986. Before the end of that period, the Department embarked upon the second phase of its PEP programme; a new contract was therefore made in November 1985, in respect of work to be completed by 31 March 1988. Subsequently, contracts were made in March 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 extending the application of the main work in line with the development of the Department's priority estates project, alternatives for social housing and housing options for Wales programmes.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each visit he has made to *(a)* sixth form colleges, *(b)* further education colleges, *(c)* university colleges and *(d)* polytechnics, in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has visited the following colleges:

	College	*Date*
(a)	None	—
(b)	Pembrokeshire College	22 May 1990
	Bangor Normal College	20 May 1991
	Pencoed College	22 May 1991
(c)	University College of North Wales	30 July 1990
	University College of Wales, Aberystwyth	12 November 1990
	University of Wales, College of Cardiff	11 February 1991
	University College Swansea	17 April 1991
(d)	Polytechnic of Wales	7 May 1991

Sports Council for Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he last met the chairman of the Sports Council for Wales;

(2) when he proposes to visit the headquarters of the Sports Council for Wales;

(3) how many times he has visited the headquarters of the Sports Council for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have visited the national sports centre for Wales once, on 25 February, when I last met the chairman of the Sports Council for Wales. No further visit has been arranged.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for extra financing of the Sports Council for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to provide extra financing for the Sports Council for Wales in addition to the generous grant-in-aid settlement announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 28 February 1991.

Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which teacher unions he has met.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I met representatives of the NAS/UWT (Wales) on 7 September 1990. We are always prepared to consider requests from the teachers' unions for meetings to discuss educational issues in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to improve the morale of teachers in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 28 November 1990. Our intention to establish a pay review body for teachers will enhance the status of the profession and improve morale further.

Standard Assessment Tests

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the teacher unions to discuss the standard assessment tests.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Tuesday 4 June.

Health Service Waiting Lists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority regarding the best means of reducing waiting lists in ophthalmology and general surgery.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I last met the chairman and consultants from South Glamorgan health authority on 24 May to discuss current waiting time issues, including those affecting ophthalmology, and ways of tackling them.

Rail Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will reconsider the contents of his letter of 31 March, addressed to Mr. J. Lazarus, county planning officer of Gwynedd county council, concerning the economic impact of the proposed reduction in British Rail's through services between Holyhead and Euston next autumn.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My letter did not refer to the economic impact of rail services to Holyhead. It did, however, draw attention to improvements to the number of journey opportunities, journey times and rolling stock which British Rail intend to bring to these services.

Social Services

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision his Department has made to each county council for social services in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* the previous year.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Revenue support grant (RSG) for each county council in Wales is paid in support of services generally and is not hypothecated.

The level of total standard spending (TSS) allowed for in the local government finance settlement for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is given in the following table. Also shown are the notional amounts provided for personal social services; it is however for local authorities to determine how resources should be allocated to particular services.

Year	*Total Standard Spending £ million*	*Personal Social Services £ million*
1990-91	2,114·5	186·8
1991-92	2,433·1	224·0

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what, at 1992 prices, was the total spending on health and personal social services in each year since 1978-79; what is the average percentage increase since May 1979; and what are the equivalent capital provisions within these annual figures.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information, on the new planning total basis, is estimated to be as follows:

£ million at 1991-92 prices

	Total net public expenditure on health and personal social services	*of which: Capital*
1978-79	1,082	70
1979-80	1,085	62
1980-81	1,177	66
1981-82	1,225	80
1982-83	1,257	83
1983-84	1,274	84
1984-85	1,313	89
1985-86	1,327	85
1986-87	1,381	90
1987-88	1,456	88
1988-89	1,506	78
1989-90	1,537	101
1990-91	1,615	118

The percentage increase for total net spending between 1978-79 and 1990-91 was over 49 per cent. in real terms (about 275 per cent. in cash). During this period, the annual average percentage increase was a little over 4 per cent. in real terms (23 per cent. in cash).

Health Service Waiting Lists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings with consultant ophthalmologists and general surgeons regarding initiatives to reduce the appropriate waiting list he has conducted during each month since January 1991.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I met general surgeons at Prince Charles, Morriston, University hospital of Wales, and the Royal Gwent hospitals and consultant ophthalmologists at the University hospital of Wales and Singleton hospital at a series of meetings on 24 and 29 May to discuss waiting list problems. In addition I have discussed the matter when visiting other hospitals over the past six months.

Anaesthetic Services

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken by the Welsh Office to make provision for additional hospital-based general anaesthetic services for tooth extraction in Wales in the light of the Poswillo report.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Consultation upon the Poswillo report is continuing. The outcome will be announced in due course.

Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of the booklet, "How is Your Child Getting on at School"; and by what means it is being distributed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Total production costs of the bilingual version of the booklet issued in Wales were £27,600.

Free copies were distributed through the Central Office of Information to all primary schools, main post offices and libraries.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings (Doncaster)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the maximum and minimum basic rates of pay recorded in the Doncaster area of the Employment Service from advertised posts in *(a)* the manufacturing sector and *(b)* the service sector for (i) full-time and (ii) part-time work, showing figures for (1) men and (2) women for the latest date he has available.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available, but figures on average earnings in April 1990 in South Yorkshire metropolitan county, for full-time men and women workers, are published in part E of the 1990 new earnings survey report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Jackson: The amount spent by my Department in 1990-91 on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases, was £10·8 million.

The following firms were awarded consultancy contracts by the Department of Employment Group during 1990-91:

Consultant	*Subject*
A. C. Mole	The Field System—supply of accountant
Astra	The Field System—supply of trainers
BPD	The Field System—supply of system tester
Calibre	The Field System—supply of trainer
CCTA	The Field System—supply of technical staff
CMG	The Field System—supply of system tester
Computer People	The Field System—supply of system tester
Coopers	The Field System—supply of accountant
CSS	The Field System—technical assurance
Digital Ltd.	The Field System—installation work, project management and communications development
Digitus	The Field System—system testing
DMBS	The Field System—system testing
England	The Field System—BACS support
Ernst and Young	The Field System—supply of accountants
Executor	The Field System—system testing
Franklin	The Field System—system testing
Future Dimensions	The Field System—training
Hunterskill	The Field System—system testing and administration
KPMG	The Field System—supply of accountant
Look Systems	The Field System—training
Lorien Ltd.	The Field System—system testing
Marcol	The Field System—system testing
Newton	The Field System—training
Novatek	The Field System—systems implementation
P-E International	The Field System—applications development
Pactum	The Field System—system testing
Price Waterhouse	The Field System—accountancy
SBS	The Field System—applications development, system testing
SEMA	The Field System—system testing
Taber Midas	The Field System—training
Trident	The Field System—system testing
Unicorn	The Field System—training
World Systems	The Field System—applications development
Yale Consultants	The Field System—system testing, analysis and development
Ingres	Supply of trainer for technical training services and quality assurance
Pogoda	Programming services
SBS	Systems testing
Instruction Set	Quality assurance and conversion programming for Information Services branch
Kernel	Systems administration
Science Systems	Software development
Tempest	Conversion work on YTS system
Abbotts	Support for TOPS mini-computer system
Aegis Group	Communications research
Anderson Consulting	Feasibility study on the use of Data Image protection technology including definition of requirements
BIS Applied Systems	Video consultancy facilities—Post implementation review
BIS Applied Systems	Government data networks security
BIS Applied Systems	Study on the introduction of the quality programme and subsequent work on the programme
BIS Applied Systems	Post implementation review—strategy view future
BT	Telephone services consultancy
Coopers and Lybrand	Work on Integration project
CCTA	Support agreement
DBI Associates	CRAMM report
DBI Associates	Contingency planning review
DCE Inf Mgt.	Software evaluation
Dataflex	Systems development for Information Services branch
Ernst and Young	Project control, evaluation reporting and reorganisation report for Information Services branch
Ernst and Young	Business analysis and evaluation report for TA Directors' Information System (TADIS)
Ernst and Young	Work on integration project
Expertech Ltd.	Superannuation expert system
Husat	Needs analysis
Inference Europe	Needs analysis
ICL	Quickbuild consultancy
J and G Ltd.	Human Factors Awareness report
KPMG	Evaluation report for Information Services branch
Kernel	Hot-line system support for Information Services branch
Kermon It. Mgt.	Scoping study for EDHQ
Kermon It. Mgt.	Information systems strategy
Lalcrest Ltd.	Function point analysis
Logica	Study of Project Support Office
Logica	Rapport support

NCC	New introduction to Data Processing course
Olivetti	Local area network connectivity report for Information Services branch
Omricon	System development for printing and stationery system
PA Consulting	Project Management and reorganisation
PA Consulting	Work on integration project and information systems strategy
Selven Ltd.	Fees paid project
Silkglade	System support for Information services
Strand	Local Area Network support
Xentec	Consultancy on data capture and system support for Information Services branch
Yale Data	Software Identification
Yale Data	International Passenger Survey —Filetab
Yale Data	Public Expenditure Survey system study
451 Computers	Applications support for EDHQ systems
Computer Management Group	Project Management System (PMS)—project design and development
Parachute	As above
Pert Master International	As above
Novatek	As above
Electronic Facilities Design Ltd	General support for procurement section
DBI Associates	Single Terminal Access Project (testing)
Electronic Facilities Design Ltd	Single Terminal Access Project (draft performance model)
EOSYS	Single Terminal Access Project (operational requirement study)
Andersons	Employment Service Payments system development
LOGICA	Business testing
CSE	Data network requirement
SEMA	Advice on introduction of Ingres and Restart
Class Ltd	Provision of SSADM expertise to IT study teams
AMTEC	Hardware strategy support
AMTEC	Accounting system study
PA Consulting	Voice Telecomms strategy
Donaldsons	Computerising conditions survey reports
Sergeant, Minton and Lennon	Communications programme project manager
Andersons	Training delivery consultant
PSA	Prioritising conditions survey reports
Calder Ashby	Revision to conditions survey agreement
EECS and Partners	Development and provision of seminar on climatic change
Ewbank Preece	Evaluation of ES property maintenance practise
Ewbank Preece	Preparation of national contract and maintenance specifications
Donaldsons	Analysis of regional conditions surveys and production of maintenance reports
Ewbank Preece	Analysis of regional consultants tenders
Fairhursts	Provision of a building contract procurement of policy document
EECS and Partners	Provision of energy survey brief for tender pack/advice on energy management and conservation matters
Sutherland Consultancy Group	Marketing advice/brief on "Jobcentre" name
Kinsley Lord	Assistance with implementation of Change Management Programme
NML Presentations Ltd	Advice on 2nd national ES conference
Kinsley Lord	Advice on diagnostic and planning phase of Change Management Programme
AR International	Pay Study
Mr. M. Gubby	Study of Head Office communications with the field
McDonald Gordon and Co.	Haven Products assignment—production efficiency review
R. Mitchell Associates	Reviews of SEPACS account forms
Prism consultancy	Total Quality Management
Ray Charlton	Design and delivery of workshop on Total Quality Management
Open College	Identification of gaps in open learning provision against management development framework
Sheppard Moscow	Management of change workshop
Walton Churchill	Interviewing and selection training
Sue Hepworth Consultants	Staff travel audit

Ex-offenders (Training)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what were the levels of expenditure on employment training for ex-offenders for each year since the inception of employment training;

(2) whether expenditure on employment training for ex-offenders has increased since the launch of Training and Enterprise Councils.

Mr. Jackson: Trainees do not have to say whether they are ex-offenders so there is no reliable information on their involvement in ET.

Earnings

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the latest information available showing the level of average earnings for *(a)* manual and *(b)* non-manual males and females in full-time employment in (i) the county of Lancashire, and *(b)* England as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested can be found in tables 108, 109, 111 and 112 of part E of the 1990 new earnings survey report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Employment Credit Schemes

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make the results of the Government's market research into the viability of employment credit schemes, and the pilot action credit scheme, available to the training and enterprise councils; and which training and enterprise councils are planning to adopt a form of such schemes in each area.

Mr. Jackson: The results of the market research carried out on behalf of the Employment Service were published

in July 1990 under the title "Action Credit: Survey of Clients", and a copy was placed in the Library of the House. The results of the pilot action credit scheme will be published shortly. They will be made available to TECs through Employment Department regional offices. No central record is kept of the extent to which TECs are planning such schemes, but it is understood that few TECs currently have such plans.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors are currently employed wholly or mainly in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: On 1 May 1991 the Health and Safety Executive employed 55 health and safety inspectors working mainly or wholly in Wales.

Early Retirement

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate for the number of people over the age of 55 years who have retired early due to redundancy.

Mr. Jackson: Reliable estimates are not available.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

EC Legislation

44. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any further plans to review the arrangements for considering EC legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government are committed to carrying out a full review of the new scrutiny procedures at the end of this parliamentary Session. In addition, as I have made clear on a number of occasions, most recently on 29 April, I keep the arrangements constantly under review, and I am presently considering whether to bring forward any proposals in the short term to deal with points that have arisen from the operation of the European Standing Committees.

Recycled Paper

45. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what percentage of publications printed by HMSO on behalf of the House of Commons appear on recycled paper; and what plans there are to increase this percentage.

Mr. MacGregor: No publications printed by HMSO on behalf of the House of Commons are produced on recycled paper at present. Much of the material concerned is of archival significance and when the question was considered by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee during the last Session, it concurred with the advice given by HMSO that recycled paper was currently unsuitable for use in producing parliamentary publications, largely due to the poor archival qualities of the paper. However, the matter is being kept under review and I have asked the Sub-Committee to look again at the proposal that the Vote bundle be printed on recycled paper.

SCOTLAND

Infant Mortality

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the infant mortality rate in *(a)* each Scottish constituency, *(b)* each health board area, and *(c)* each postal district, in the last available year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures show that there were 510 infant deaths in Scotland in 1990, giving an infant mortality rate of 7·7 deaths per 1,000 live births. This continues the long-term downward trend. At this level, care must be taken in comparing rates for different areas.

Rates for the 15 health board areas are given below: those based on fewer than 10 deaths are marked with an asterisk.

Rates for the 72 parliamentary constituencies and the 438 postal districts are not given because comparisons at this area level could be misleading.

Infant Death Rates, Scotland 1990 (Provisional)

Health Board Areas	*Number*
Borders	10·7
Forth Valley	8·1
Dumfries and Galloway	*5·0
Fife	7·2
Grampian	6·8
Highland	8·5
Lothian	7·9
Tayside	9·1
Orkney	*7·4
Shetland	*0·0
Western Isles	*8·7
Argyll and Clyde	10·1
Ayrshire and Arran	6·4
Greater Glasgow	7·3
Lanarkshire	7·4

Justices of the Peace

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many justices of the peace in Scotland are *(a)* men and *(b)* women; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

I am advised on the appointment of justices of the peace for each district and islands area by advisory committees. The committees have all been given guidance to the effect that it is desirable that the area of selection be wide and the choice comprehensive, so that commissions of the peace may include both men and women and be broadly representative of all sections of the community which they serve.

Justices of the peace in Scotland as at 1 May 1991

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Justices appointed by the Secretary of State	2,893	745	3,638
Ex officio justices nominated by local authorities	235	59	294
Justices by virtue of having held office as a magistrate immediately before 16 May 1975	418	44	462
All justices	3,546	848	4,394

Hospital Services (East Lothian)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation took place between Lothian health board and the Scottish ambulance service about the implications of closures of hospital services in East Lothian on the workload of the ambulance service before those wards and units were closed; and if he will make a statement on the measures being taken to meet that workload in terms of manpower, equipment and finance.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish ambulance service was consulted by the health board as part of the public consultation of interested parties from 29 May to 30 July 1990.

In order to meet the additional workload and to improve the service, including a reduction in single manning, 14 additional staff were employed in the East Lothian area at a cost of £286,000. No extra vehicles and equipment were required.

Cottage Hospitals

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for the last five years for which figures are available, the bed occupancy rate of Meigle cottage hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is shown in the table.

In-patient bed occupancy rate at Meigle cottage hospital years ending 30 September

Year	*Occupancy Per cent.*
1986	81·8
1987	74·5
1988	82·6
1989	81·0
1990	83·4

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Government policy concerning cottage hospitals in general, and Meigle cottage hospital in particular.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is primarily the responsibility of health boards to determine the extent and level of services they provide in the light of local circumstances and priorities. Proposals for the future of Meigle cottage hospital are currently being considered by Tayside health board.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many isolates of legionella species have been found in the water supply of Greater Glasgow health board premises in the last year; which hospitals have been affected; and what steps have been taken.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since June 1990 one species of Legionellaceae, namely, Legionella Pneumophila serogroup 1, has been found in the water systems within Greater Glasgow health board's premises.

During 1990 the Glasgow royal infirmary and the Glasgow Western infirmary both recorded cases of Legionnaire's disease. There are currently no outbreaks in Greater Glasgow area.

Greater Glasgow health board has an ongoing programme of water systems disinfection, maintenance and upgrading and are researching the proliferation of legionellae bacterium in water distribution systems. Over the past two years £250,000 has been spent on these measures and an allocation of £500,000 has been made for 1991-92.

Health Boards (Regrading)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number of regraded medical physics technicians, pharmacy technicians and medical photographers who have appealed against their new grade; and how many of these appeals have been heard.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on appeals lodged with health boards against their implementation of a new pay and grading structure for various groups of technicians and the length of time it has taken to process them is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many, both in absolute and percentage terms, of physiological measurement technicians, cardiology, were upgraded during the recent restructuring exercise in *(a)* Greater Glasgow health board and *(b)* all other health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The agreement concluded by the Professional and Technical Staffs B Whitley council in September 1989 related to a new pay and grading structure for various groups of technicians, including physiological measurement technicians and cardiographers. Information is not held centrally on the grades of staff prior and subsequent to implementation of the agreement and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In the financial sense, all staff received an increase on assimilation to the pay spine, which was one of the features of the agreement.

Further Education

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the amount of access funds allocated to each college of further education in Scotland for 1990-91 and the amount paid out to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The allocations to the individual colleges of further education are listed in the table. All the sums concerned have been paid to the education authorities with the exception of that allocated to Shetland Islands council. It has only recently accepted the requirements for participation in the access funds and has yet to indicate the extent of its commitments for the remainder of the 1990-91 session.

Further Education Colleges	*£*
Borders	
Borders College of Further Education	10,255
Central	
Clackmannan College of Further Education	15,803
Falkirk College of Technology	27,645
Dumfries and Galloway	
Dumfries and Galloway College of Technology	15,669

Further Education Colleges	£
The Barony College	2,148
Fife	
Elmwood Agricultural and Technical College	6,097
Fife College of Technology	41,304
Glenrothes and Buckhaven Technical College	12,294
Lauder College	7,593
Grampian	
Aberdeen College of Commerce	36,019
Aberdeen Technical College	10,841
Banff and Buchan College of Further Education	15,715
Clinterty Agricultural College	3,457
Highland	
Inverness College of Further and Higher Education	28,097
Moray College of Further Education	28,754
Thurso Technical College	5,448
Lothian	
Jewel and Esk Valley College	27,471
Oatridge Agricultural College	2,043
Stevenson College	32,237
Telford College of Further Education	43,516
West Lothian College of Further Education	12,336
Orkney	
Stromness Nautical College	471
Shetland	
Shetland College of Further Education	2,200
Strathclyde	
Anniesland College	11,200
Ayr College	28,059
Barmulloch College	8,957
Bell College of Technology	53,325
Cambuslang College	13,446
Cardonald College	45,088
Central College of Commerce	25,575
Clydebank College	57,807
Coatbridge College	20,828
Cumbernauld College	15,471
Glasgow College of Building and Printing	39,696
Glasgow College of Food Technology	22,498
Glasgow College of Nautical Studies	14,742
James Watt College	25,973
John Wheatley College	13,305
Kilmarnock College	24,121
Langside College	42,781
Motherwell College	29,209
Reid Kerr College	32,445
Springburn College	9,481
Stow College	20,056
Tayside	
Angus College of Further Education	12,009
Dundee College of Further Education	76,009
Perth College of Further Education	23,808
Western Isles	
Lews Castle College	6,214

NORTHERN IRELAND

Beef

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he gave approval for the re-boxing of intervention beef at Ulster Cold Stores for the Goodman Group; what information he has on the re-boxing of beef at Ulster Cold Stores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The re-boxing of intervention beef at the Ulster Cold Stores was approved by the Intervention Board executive agency. Approved re-boxing at that location commenced in November 1986 and continues up to the present. All approved re-boxing up to 5 August 1990 was supervised by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and since then by the Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland as agents of the agency.

The procedural rules relating to the Department of Agriculture Northern Ireland/Livestock Marketing Commission supervision of re-packing/reboxing operations require the following conditions to be met:

the beef must remain in the frozen state throughout the re-packing;

the beef must not be mixed or re-packed with non-intervention beef;

only boxes of the same cut can be cut and re-boxed together; mixing of cuts is not allowed;

replacement of boxes must be marked with the net weight; cut name; number of cuts; and the original number;

the correct tare of new boxes and any wrap must be obtained and the net weight of the contents recorded.

Housing

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to reduce the age at which houses may qualify for improvement or repair grants.

Mr. Needham: As part of a forthcoming draft housing order, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is considering changes to the house renovation grants scheme comparable to those recently introduced in England and Wales under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

These changes provide for all dwellings over 10 years old to qualify for renovation grant aid: dwellings requiring provision for or adaptations to meet the needs of a disabled person are exempt from this criterion.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to change the year specified within the regulations of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's home improvement and repair grant schemes as the threshold year for entry to the grant scheme.

Mr. Needham: Within the terms of the present legislation, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive exercises its discretion to target the availability of grant-aid towards those persons and properties most in need. In doing so, it has, in certain instances, restricted the availability of grant-aid to properties built before certain specified dates.

However, as part of the forthcoming housing order, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is considering changes to the house renovation grants scheme comparable to those recently introduced in England and Wales under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

These changes would provide for all dwellings over 10 years old to qualify for renovation grant aid: dwellings where works are required to meet the needs of a disabled person are exempt from this criterion.

General Practitioners

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many general practitioners bought added years (old style) pension rights in 1975; how many

of these general practitioners were under 43 years old in 1972; what were the figures for general practitioners aged under 44 years in steps of £500 as based on average updated earnings to October 1972; and how many of the general practitioners are still paying for the added years.

Mr. Hanley: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ulster Talks (Chairman)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the names of the possible candidates for the position of independent chairman of strand 2 of the Ulster talks who have been suggested by the Irish Government and rejected by Her Majesty's Government;

(2) if he will list the names of the possible candidates for the position of independent chairman of strand 2 of the Ulster talks who have been suggested by Her Majesty's Government and rejected by the Irish Government.

Mr. Brooke: I would not regard it as helpful to disclose details surrounding the appointment of the chairman. To do so would also be a breach of confidentiality.

SOCIAL SECURITY

War Pensioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by location, his Department's war pensioners offices; and if he will make a statement on each one's future.

Mr. Jack: War pensioners' welfare offices are located as follows:

Scotland—Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow
North East—Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, Middlesbrough
North West—Preston, Bootle, Manchester
Midlands—Birmingham, Nottingham
Wales—Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham
South West—Bristol, Newton Abbot
London, North—Euston, High Wycombe, Norwich
London, South—Balham, Basingstoke, Brighton, Portsmouth, Tunbridge Wells
Northern Ireland—Belfast
Republic of Ireland—Dublin, Cork

A report last year of a routine management inspection of the war pensions welfare service made several recommendations about the location of war pensioners' welfare offices. No decisions have been taken on the recommendations. The welfare service has been incorporated into the new war pensions directorate which is considering whether offices are in the right places to deliver the most efficient service to war pensioners. Any proposals for change which may emerge will be discussed fully with the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions and local war pensions committees will have an opportunity to comment. The interests of war pensioners and war widows will be safeguarded and we shall ensure that the effectiveness of the welfare service is fully maintained.

Benefit Scale Rates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the supplementary benefit-income support scale rate for *(a)* a single adult and *(b)* a married couple each year since 1970, the level of national average earnings for each of these years, and the single and married scale rates as a percentage of national average earnings for each of these years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is contained in tables 5.6(a), 5.6(b), 5.11(b), 5.11(c), 6.4(a) and 6.5(a) of, "Abstract of Statistics Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions", published by the Department of Social Security, a copy of which is available in the Library.

National Insurance Contributions (Earnings Limit)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the current numbers and the average number for 1991-92 of individuals with earned income above the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Jack: Following the recent rise in the upper earnings limit, it is estimated that just under 3 million employees currently have earnings above this level. It is also estimated that during 1991-92 an average of 3·1 million employees will have earnings above the upper earnings limit. In addition, about 0·5 million self-employed people will earn above the upper profits limit.

Pensions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy regarding index-linking private pensions in the near future.

Miss Widdecombe: Contracted-out occupational pension schemes and appropriate personal pension schemes are already under a statutory obligation annually to increase guaranteed minimum pensions accruing in respect of contracted-out employment from 6 April 1988, or pensions or annuities deriving from protected rights, in line with increases in the retail prices index to a maximum of 3 per cent. Guaranteed minimum pensions in respect of contracted-out employments before 6 April 1988, and any excess over 3 per cent. thereafter, are indexed by the state earnings-related pension scheme in line with the retail prices index.

The Social Security Act 1990 includes a provision which will require occupational pension schemes to provide annual increases in the rate of salary-related pensions (other than guaranteed minimum pensions) accruing in respect of pensionable service from an appointed day. The increase will be linked to increases in the retail prices index to a maximum of 5 per cent. a year. In addition, schemes which have a surplus of assets over liabilities will be required to make comparable increases in respect of service before that day. No final decision has been made as to when this provision will come into effect.

National Insurance (Company Cars)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), 1 May, *Official Report*, column *254*, whether his estimate includes the effect of changes proposed in the 1991 Budget for national insurance contributions on company cars and fuel.

Mr. Jack: The figure of £750 million given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) includes an amount

of £610 million which is attributable to the extension of employers' national insurance contributions to company cars and fuel, announced in the 1991 Budget.

Pensioners' Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the estimated annual expenditure at current prices of pensioners in the Deeside area on *(a)* heating, *(b)* lighting and *(c)* travel in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985 and (iii) the last year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

Social Fund

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the gross and net budgets of the social fund for each of the local offices in Wales for each year since 1988-89, under the headings of *(a)* crisis loans, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* community care grants, showing the change in real terms since 1988-89 in each case.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the public information office.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will bring up to date the information regarding family credit awards and case load given in his reply on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns *541-44*.

Mr. Jack: The information now available, for August 1990 and subsequent months, is as follows:

	Number of family credit awards current at end of month[1]	*Caseload (including backdated awards) as at end of month*		
		Self-employed	*Employees*	*Total*
August 1990	281,414	48,140	276,500	324,640
September 1990	282,019	48,080	278,540	326,620
October 1990	280,744	47,860	278,600	326,460
November 1990	293,343	—	—	[2]324,000
December 1990	284,429	—	—	[2]317,000
January 1991	281,250	—	—	[2]315,000
February 1991	288,924	—	—	[2]322,000
March 1991	294,202	—	—	[3]—
April 1991	292,752	—	—	[3]—
May 1991	300,096	—	—	[3]—

[1] A breakdown between employees and self-employed is not available.
[2] Provisional total: no breakdown between employees and self-employed at this stage.
[3] Meaningful figures not yet available because of claims not yet decided.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families with the main earner *(a)* employed and *(b)* self-employed, were receiving family credit of *(a)* under £10, *(b)* £10 to £19·99, *(c)* £20 to £29·99, *(d)* £30 to £39·99, *(e)* £40 to £49·99, *(f)* £50 to £59·99 and *(g)* £60 or more, at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Jack: At 31 October 1990, the latest date for which this information is available, the breakdown of the families receiving family credit was as follows:

Weekly amount of Family Credit	*Main earner self-employed*	*Main earner employed*
Under £10	3,120	47,920
£10 to £19·99	4,820	59,460
£20 to £29·99	5,820	53,700
£30 to £39·99	5,680	45,880
£40 to £49·99	8,760	35,960
£50 to £59·99	10,280	20,240
£60 or more	9,380	15,440

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for family credit have been refused since April 1988; and what proportion of new claims in each of the months April and May 1991 was unsuccessful.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he is taking to improve the level of service to family credit claimants.

Mr. Jack: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the public information office.

Residential Care

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recent representations he has received concerning income support levels and residential care.

Miss Widdecombe: Several representations have been received recently both from individuals and representative bodies.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to meet representatives from the National Care Homes Association to discuss funding arrangements for care in residential and nursing homes.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed to speak at the National Care Homes Association's annual conference on 31 October. He has no plans to meet representatives before that.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what have been the percentage increases in each year since 1988 for the housing benefit non-dependant deductions.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

	Amount of deduction	*Percentage increase*
1988		
Rent Rebates/Allowances		
Higher rate	8·20	—
Lower rate	3·45	—
Rate rebates	3·00	—
1989		
Rent Rebates/Allowances		
Higher rate	9·15	11·6
Lower rate	3·85	11·6
Rate rebates	3·35	11·7
1990		
Rent Rebates/Allowances		
Higher rate	10·85	18·6
Lower rate	4·55	18·2
1991		
Rent Rebates/Allowances		
Higher rate	13·50	24·4
Lower rate	5·70	25·3

Notes:

Non-dependant deductions are uprated by reference to the retail prices index for housing.

Variations in the percentage increases are due to rounding.

Child Support Bill

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the benefit savings to be made if the income support of absent parents is to be reduced by virtue of clause 39(2) of the Child Support Bill.

Mr. Jack: Clause 39(2) of the Child Support Bill provides for a power to seek a contribution to maintenance from absent parents on income support by deduction from their income support to reinforce the message that they have the same responsibility as other parents. But those who are sick or disabled, or who are claiming income support for dependent children will be zero-rated. The long-term reduction in benefit expenditure from applying the deduction to those who are fit and able to work is provisionally estimated at approximately £9 million at 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received on clause 22 of the Child Support Bill.

Mr. Jack: On initial publication of the White Paper, "Children Come First", we received some 250 written representations of which 56 contained specific responses on our proposals to reduce the caring parent benefit which were reflected in the Bill's original clause 22. Since the introduction of the Child Support Bill we have received about 20 letters on clause 22, some occasioned by representations to Members of Parliament from bodies who had also responded at the time of the White Paper publication.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate has been made of the administrative cost of applying deductions from income support by virtue of clause 35(2) of the Child Support Bill.

Mr. Jack: The long-term administrative cost of all deductions from income support arising as a result of the Child Support Bill is provisionally estimated at about £4 million at 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had on clause 22 of the Child Support Bill.

Mr. Jack: We sought the views of organisations and members of the public on all aspects of the proposals set out in the White Paper "Children Come First", including the measures set out in the former clause 22. We have received many letters on this subject. In addition to representation by means of letter we were pleased to meet some of the principle organisations representing lone parents, when, as part of our wider consultations on the Bill we discussed both the current clause 6 and the former clause 22.

Disability

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to advertise benefits available to disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Since January 1990 we are taking the following steps to advertise benefits available to disabled people:

i. Regular local radio and regional TV broadcasts involving our team of regional information officers.

ii. Displays and mobile advice units in communities across the country, which include talks to carers and disabled people, visits to hospitals, day centres and other similar organisations.

iii. National press campaigns advertising changes to disability benefits aimed at specialist carers and people with disabilities.

iv. A specialist press, mail-out and press editorial campaign to announce changes to attendance allowance.

v. A publicity campaign on mobility allowance directed at carers and advisers of people who are both deaf and blind. This consists of direct mailings supported by free editorial coverage in press and radio.

vi. A campaign to announce a new telephone advice and information service for people with disabilities. As part of this service, for those people with impaired vision or who are blind we are providing letters and forms in Braille and large print.

Special telecommunications facilities are available for those people with hearing difficulties. This advertising campaign is currently being run in southern England and is due to be run nationwide at the end of June.

Students

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider allowing payment of income support to students during the coming summer vacation who are unable to obtain temporary employment; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Financial support for students throughout the year, including the summer vacation, is provided through the educational maintenance system. But certain students such as those who are disabled, lone parents, and student couples with children, may qualify for income support during the summer vacation. We have no plans to extend this concession.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice his Department gives to students who

apply for benefit for the period during the summer vacation because there is no temporary work available; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Full-time students are no longer entitled to unemployment benefit. With the exception of certain vulnerable groups, they are similarly unable to qualify for income support and housing benefit. Financial support throughout the year, including the summer vacation, is provided through the educational maintenance system.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefit a student can obtain during the summer vacation who cannot obtain temporary employment; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: With the exception of unemployment benefit, income support and housing benefit, the normal range of social security benefits is available to full-time students who satisfy the appropriate qualifying conditions. Full-time students in certain vulnerable groups, including lone parents, student couples with dependent children and disabled students also retain eligibility to income support and housing benefit. Partners of students may also qualify for these benefits on behalf of the couple.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as is available for the latest period for which it is available regarding the number of sittings of social security appeal tribunals in each region at which no presenting officer appeared.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 26 April 1991 at column *602*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pensioners (Television Licences)

13. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will meet pensioner representatives to discuss free television licences for pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Giving free licences to all pensioners, including those who are well able to pay the fee, would cost £470 million a year, and would mean that everyone else would have to pay £116 for their colour licence. We have no plans to change the present arrangements and a meeting would serve no useful purpose.

Refugees

14. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were given refugee status in each of the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Around 3,000 people, including associated dependants, were recognised as refugees in 1989 in the United Kingdom. For 1990 the provisional figure recorded at present is about 1,600, but this is likely to understate because of delays in recording.

Community Service Orders

15. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress being made with community service orders.

Mr. John Patten: National standards on the supervision of community service orders were introduced two years ago, on 1 April 1989. As intended, they have been effective in achieving tighter and more consistent management of this work by probation services. My Department is now circulating to probation services an analysis of the first year's operation of the standards.

Police Authorities

16. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to modify the structure and control of police authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have no plans to modify the structure and control of police authorities. The Government remain committed to the tripartite structure of our policing system and the value of local involvement. There are developments that we need in providing support to the police service and enhancing the delivery of policing as a local service, but these can be achieved using the flexibility of the Police Act 1964. This is the message I will be giving to the Association of Chief Police Officers in a speech tonight.

Prison Service

17. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on industrial relations within the prison service.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are currently 43 local disputes registered under the disputes procedure agreed between the POA and prison service management. The level of disputes is a matter of concern, particularly when it results in industrial action leading to prisoners being held in police cells.

Following a POA ballot last June in favour of industrial action but not strike action on issues of staffing and safety, there has been a series of meetings with the POA to resolve the dispute which have not yet been successful.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the Prison Reform Trust to discuss implementation of the recommendations of the Woolf report.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will next month be addressing a conference organised by the Prison Reform Trust. We shall listen with interest to all representations made about the future direction of the prison service while preparing the forthcoming White Paper.

Obscenity Law

18. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to amend the law on obscenity.

Mr. John Patten: If suitable proposals are put forward which appear likely to command wide support, we will of course consider supporting them.

Constitutional Arrangements

19. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the constitutional machinery of Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such plans. We believe that our present constitutional arrangements serve their respective purposes well.

Television Franchise Applications

20. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission to discuss the franchise applications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. It is for the Independent Television Commission, acting independently of Government, to assess the applications for Channel 3 licences.

Sunday Trading

21. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to meet the Shopping Hours Reform Council to discuss Sunday trading.

Mrs. Rumbold: I met representatives of the Shopping Hours Reform Council yesterday. The meeting was one in the extensive programme of separate discussions which I am holding with bodies representing retailers and other interests, to assist in the possible development of acceptable proposals for the reform of the Sunday trading law.

Prisons, Yorkshire

22. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to make an official visit to Yorkshire to inspect prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend's current programme of visits to prisons does not include any in Yorkshire, but I visited HM prison Leeds in April and am planning to visit HM prison Askham Grange in July. I will also be opening HM prison Moorland, near Doncaster, in October.

Sex Offenders

24. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that imprisoned sex offenders have access to appropriate counselling services.

Mrs. Rumbold: Although many prison establishments already undertake individual counselling and group therapy with sex offenders, the current provision is largely unco-ordinated.

The Criminal Justice Bill places particular emphasis on tackling offending behaviour. My right hon. Friend hopes to announce shortly details of a structured programme for sex offenders in prison.

Iraqi Citizens

25. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to change the rules for admission of Iraqi citizens to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend did so on 12 April. Applications by Iraqi nationals now fall to be considered against normal immigration criteria.

Prison Service (Properties)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the constituencies in the United Kingdom that contain domestic properties owned by the prison service and the number of properties in each constituency.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Racial Attacks

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints of attacks with a racial motive have been reported in each year since 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: National figures for racially motivated incidents are collected annually; 6,459 incidents were reported to police forces in England and Wales in 1990.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken by his Department to eliminate racial attacks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has issued a series of guidelines to all police forces on responding effectively and as a priority to racial attacks. Good practice in preventing attacks, supporting victims and dealing with perpetrators is spread and monitored, in co-operation with Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. We are co-ordinating the work of all responsible agencies in providing further guidance, information and evaluation on national and local initiatives. Broader policies on equal opportunities, quality of service and police training are designed to take full account of the problem of racial attacks.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for which the contract was carried out.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office spent approximately £4,503,000 on management and computer consultancies, excluding hardware and software purchases, in the 1990-91 financial year. Details of the management and computer consultancies awarded, none of which was carried out for an executive agency, are as follows:

Supplier	*Description*
Capita Group Ltd. (The)	Consultancy support for performance measurement training
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Magistrates Courts Agency: Costing of the start up and running

Sallmans Int Prop Cons	Appointment of project coordinator
Mr B Webb	Research into crime on London Underground Limited
Touche Ross	Review of catering service at fire service college
Jones Lang Wooton	City search
A R Brannon	Appointment of consultant to conduct an enquiry
A Langdown	Appointment of fire consultant
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Review of paperwork
Collingwood Court and Association	Market research for Hull safer cities project
Capita Group Ltd. (The)	Project coordinator for study of CICB
DEGW	Prison service headquarters: Space consultancy
Vista Communications	Prison service communications audit
PE International	Review of British visitors passport and standard passport
Mr. P. Hyde	Design and conduct of a seminar for senior management
Charles Baker City Ltd.	Provision of public relations support for the sale of national transcommunications
Price Waterhouse	Study into television licence fee
J. Burrows	Best practice in commercial crime prevention
Ernst and Young	Validation of IT strategy
Handley-Walker Group	Preparation of draft specification for market-testing of S and T warehousing and distribution activities
PA Consultants	Area manager training
Michael Associates	Research into CCTV
Prof. R. V. Clarke	Thievability index
Ernst and Young	Court escort area survey
Price Waterhouse	Police activity sampling
Saville and Holdsworth Ltd.	Revision of police initial recruitment test
Touche Ross	Preparation of financial model
H. D. Associates	Re-organisation
Neville Clark Ltd.	Quality systems
P. Hannant	Advice on police aviation
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	Review of common police services
Management Exchange Limited (THE)	Feasibility study on police training needs
Admiral	Technical assurance
Radius	Software conversion
S-Com	Software production
Whitworth	Fire cover model technical manual
Oracle	File tracking testing
LOGICA	Lunar house LAN design
DOWTY	Fire brigade communications
Hans Grafte	SSADM consultancy
ZENTECH	MIS system consultancy
Strand	COMMS infrastructure
INTAC	Video conferencing consultancy
PA Consulting Group	INCIS project manager
Winway	LIDS 2 technical manager
Oracle	Oracle consultancy
Oracle	Financial management system consultancy
Hoskyns	LIDS post implementation review
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	MIS consultancy
DBI Associates	Business case guide
Oracle	Oracle consultancy
VNG Nationwide	Oracle consultancy
Hoskyns Group	NCRS project
DBI Associates	PROMIS strategy review
Rede Group	Quality consultancy
DBI Associates	Prince consultancy
CCMS	Charging system consultancy
Hoskyns Group	UNIX capacity management
CSC	INCIS technical architect
Grafton	INCIS technical designer
Grafton	INCIS systems analysis
Admiral	Technical author
Admiral	AFMIS risk analysis
Software AG	Technical manager
Winway Systems	ITS technical management
Grafton	Application software consultancy
Siemens Nixdorf	Siemens software consultancy
RMIS	Probation study
Bell Software	Database administration support
Ernst and Young	Promis/spits strategy
Paradis	Packaging of algorithms
CSC	CDA Manager
Metier	Artemis support
Kermon	Mass project support
DBI Associates	Technical author
CSS	CICB Study
Kermon	Technical Manager
Hoskyns Group	Unix Policy Review
Kermon	IEU Software Consultancy
VNG Nationwide	Oracle Consultancy
Hoskyns Group	Review of projects
Recognition research	AFR Neural Networks Consultancy
Kermon	IT strategy
Kermon	Procurement support
Winway	ITS Risk Analysis
Glossa	AFR Investigation Work
OFICE	Prison comms study
ENE	Survey of Prison lans
T. J. Knewett	IT requirements for Probation Service
Kermon	Prepare IT strategy for Probation Service
Cooper, Lybrand and Deloitte	Review of Microb
Mourney Partners	IT strategy for training
Price Waterhouse	Advice on fallout modelling computer programmes
Hunting Engineering	Modifying Protfac code

Prisons (Assaults)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the procedures under which allegations into serious assault in prisons are investigated; and whether such allegations are automatically referred to the police.

Mrs. Rumbold: If a prisoner is suspected of a serious offence against the law, including assault, the governor has discretion to refer the matter to the police for investigation. The internal disciplinary code includes charges that may amount to a criminal offence, however, and it is normal, therefore, for behaviour that might amount to a relatively minor criminal offence to be investigated and dealt with internally.

Allegations against staff are investigated, and governors may, on prison service headquarters' advice, refer such allegations to the police for investigation if there is evidence that a criminal offence may have been committed. Evidence that a serious assault had occurred would invariably be referred to the police.

Street Lighting and Crime

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the research by Southampton university, funded by the Home Office, into the effect of street lighting on crime in Wandsworth.

Mr. John Patten: We hope to publish the results of this research as a Home Office crime prevention unit paper within the next few months.

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to correspondence originating from Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Mayne, of Chywarthen, Tarrandean Lane, Perranwell Station, Truro, transferred to his Department on 27 March from the Department of the Environment under their reference K/PSO/5781/91.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply was sent to my hon. Friend on 29 May.

Violent Crime

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the incidence of violent crime in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the incidence of violent crime in other countries of the EC and in the United States of America.

Mr. John Patten: There were about 250,000 violent crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales in 1990, about 6 per cent. of all recorded crime.

A recent international crime survey showed that in 1988 the risk of being the victim of violent crime in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland was lower than in most western European countries—for example, Belgium. Within western Europe, risks were highest in Finland, the Netherlands and West Germany. The risk in the USA was the highest of all countries surveyed. The results of the survey are in "Experiences of Crime across the World: Key findings from the 1989 International Crime Survey", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Curtis Howard

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date in 1990 Mr. Curtis Howard, an American citizen, was deported from the United Kingdom; what entry was made in his passport at that time; when and where he is believed to have entered the United Kingdom this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. Curtis Howard was removed from the United Kingdom to the United States of America as an illegal entrant on 5 July 1990 and his passport was endorsed to show this. Police inquiries into his more recent movements are continuing, but I understand that Mr. Howard did not gain entry in his true identity.

Disability

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the head of programming at the BBC to discuss subtitles for the deaf.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend meets representatives of the BBC from time to time to discuss a range of broadcasting issues. However, programming and subtitling are matters for them to determine, within their public service responsibilities.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has taken to ensure that all polling booths are accessible to disabled people.

Mrs. Rumbold: I assume that the hon. Gentleman means polling stations rather than polling booths. As he is aware, district and London borough councils in England and Wales have a statutory obligation to place polling stations in buildings which are accessible to disabled people, wherever this is practicable. My officials last wrote to councils in December 1989 to remind them of their duty in this respect and will do so again shortly.

Police Records

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of the planned NCIS computer network for intelligence on major crime.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The requirements of the computer system for the national criminal intelligence service have not yet been finalised. Until the specification for the system has been agreed, it is not possible to say what the cost is likely to be.

Women (European Community)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who represented the United Kingdom at the Informal Council on the Conditions of Women in the EC member states held in Luxemboug on 13 May; what was discussed; what priorities were put forward for action; and whether there are plans for a further meeting.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I attended the informal meeting of Women's Ministers in Luxembourg on 13 May in my capacity as chairman of the ministerial group on women's issues. We discussed the implementation of the third medium term (1991-95) Community action programme on equal opportunities for women and men and child care provision in the member states.

The meeting endorsed the overall objective of the Commission's third action programme and there was an exchange of views on child care provision. It is up to each presidency to decide whether to call an informal meeting of Ministers.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dog owners have been *(a)* fined and *(b)* imprisoned because of attacks by their dogs; what was the average fine or prison sentence in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* The latest figures in respect of offences under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, the Dogs Act 1871 and the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 are as follows:

	Number fined	*Average fine* £	*Number imprisoned*
1985	124	33	—
1986	112	41	—
1987	104	43	—
1988	104	38	—
1989	134	51	—

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reports of dog attacks he

has received in each of the last five years; how many *(a)* children and *(b)* adults were injured, seriously injured and killed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* The Home Office is not routinely informed of attacks by dogs and no statistics about them are collected centrally.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Whales

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what efforts the British Government have made to prevent other nations from hunting whales for commercial reasons.

Mr. Curry: At the recent meeting of the International Whaling Commission the United Kingdom continued to play a leading role in ensuring that the moratorium on commercial whaling was upheld. Further, requests for catch quotas by Iceland and Japan were turned down, resolutions were passed against the research whaling plans of Japan and the USSR and ensuring a follow-up to a report on the status of small cetacean populations. At the United Kingdom's suggestion a special review will be undertaken on the humaneness of whale killing methods, an issue about which we are particularly concerned.

Ivermectin

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring is undertaken to detect traces of ivermectin in farmed salmon on sale in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Ivermectin is not licensed for use in fish in the United Kingdom and, to date, no monitoring has been conducted to detect residues in ivermectin in the edible tissues of farmed salmon on sale in the United Kingdom. However, surveillance for residues in farmed fish is currently being stepped up and testing for ivermectin will be included within the scope of the new arrangements.

Pig Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he intends to introduce a compulsory slaughter policy with compensation for herds affected, or suspected of being affected by blue ear pig disease;

(2) whether he will ban all live pig imports from countries where blue ear pig disease has been confirmed;

(3) what steps he is taking to protect the United Kingdom pig industry from blue ear pig disease.

Mr. Maclean: Until the causative agent is identified, there is no way of knowing if slaughtering herds would be an effective means of controlling the disease. Commission decision 91/237/EEC of 25 April prohibits exports of pigs for breeding or production from infected farms and municipalities in those member states where the disease has been confirmed. No live pigs are being imported from affected countries. There are no approved foot and mouth disease quarantine premises for pigs and there has been no trade interest in such imports.

Artificial Sweeteners

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take to protect the United Kingdom's crisp and snack industry from adverse affects of the proposed EC directive on artificial sweeteners.

Mr. Maclean: We are continuing to press for the inclusion of these products in the proposed directive.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the pesticide active ingredients which are currently *(a)* under review and *(b)* awaiting review, indicating whether each one is due for a full or partial review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information set out below relates to pesticide active ingredients which are *(a)* currently under review and *(b)* awaiting review. Although an indication of full or partial review has been given for these active ingredients listed at *(a)*, it is not possible at this stage to indicate the nature of the reviews that will be undertaken in respect of the pesticides detailed at *(b)*. A decision on the extent of these reviews will be made once approval holders have submitted details of all data held in support of products based on the active ingredients.

(a) Active ingredients first approved before 1981 and currently under review

Alachlor—*Full*
Atrazine—*Full*
Benomyl—*Partial*
Bromoxynil—*Full*
Captan—*Partial*
Carbendazim—*Partial*
Chlorothalonil—*Partial*
Demeton-S-methyl—*Full*
Demeton-S-methyl-sulphone—*Full*
Diazinon—*Full*
Dichlorvos—*Full*
Dithiocarbamates:
- Ferbam—*Full*
- Mancozeb—*Full*
- Maneb—*Full*
- Nabam—*Full*
- Propineb—*Full*
- Thiram—*Full*
- Zineb—*Full*
- Zineb-ethylene-thiuram disulphide adduct—*Full*
- Ziram—*Full*

Dinocap—*Full*
Ioxynil—*Full*
Isoproturon—*Full*
Lindane—*Full*
Linuron—*Full*
Methyl bromide—*Partial*
Monolinuron—*Full*
Oxydemeton-methyl—*Full*
Simazine—*Full*
Synthetic Pyrethroids:
- Cypermethrin—*Partial*
- Deltamethrin—*Partial*
- Permethrin—*Partial*
- 8 post-1981 compounds—*Partial*

Thiophanate methyl—*Partial*
Thiabendazole—*Partial*
Tecnazene—*Full*
2-Aminobutane—*Partial*
2,4,D—*Full*
Vinclozolin—*Partial*
Chlorfenvinphos—*Full*
Dimethoate—*Full*
+Omethoate*—*Full*
+Formothion*—*Full*

Malathion—*Full*
Mecoprop—*Full*
+Mecoprop-p*—*Full*
Phorate—*Full*
Triazophos—*Full*

(b) Active Ingredients awaiting review
Category 1 (top priority)
Azinphos-methyl
Dichlorophen + DB (2,4-)
Dichlorprop
Diquat
Fentin acetate
Fentin hydroxide
MCPA + MCPB*
Metaldehyde
Methiocarb
Nicotine
Paraquat
Pirimicarb
Pirimiphos-methyl + Pirimiphos-ethyl*
Sodium Cyanide
Zinc Phosphide + Aluminium phosphide*

PRIORITY LISTS: CATEGORIES 2 TO 3

If at any time areas of particular concern about active ingredients in the categories are identified, priorities will be reassed and an immediate partial or full review may be undertaken.

Category 2
Aldicarb
Alphachloralose
Ammonium sulphamate
Benazolin
Carbaryl
Chloroethylphosphonic acid
Chlorpropham
Chlorpyriphos
Chlorpyriphos-methyl
Copper Hydroxide
Copper Oxychloride
Copper Sulphate
Copper-complex-Bordeaux mixture
Cresylic Acid
Dicamba
Dichlofluanid
Disulfoton
Endosulfan
Formaldehyde
Iprodione
Maleic Hydrazide
Methomyl
Pentachlorophenol
TCA
Tetradifon
Tri-allate
Trichlorfon
Trifluralin
Vamidothion

Category 3
Aluminium sulphate
Ammonium carbonate
Ammonium sulphate
Bitumen
Bromophos
Bupirimate
Butoxycarboxim
Carbofuran
Chloridazon
Chlorotoluron
Chloroxuron
Copper ammonium carbonate
Coumatetralyl
Dalapon
Desmetryne
Dichlobenil
Diocofol
Dithianon
Diuron
Dodine
Etrimfos
Fatty acids
Fenitrothion
Ferric sulphate
Ferrous sulphate
Glyphosate
Heptenophos
Imazalil
Indol-3-ylacetic acid
Indol-3-ylbutyric acid
Lenacil
Mephostolan
Metalaxyl
Naled
Pepper
Phenols
Prometryn
Propiconazole
Propyzamide
Pyrazophos
Pyrethrins-pyrethrum
Quinomethionate
Rotenone
Sodium chlorate
Sodium hydrogen carbonate
Sodium tetraborate
Sulphur
Tar oils
TBA (2,3,6-)
Terbutryn
Tetramethrin
Thiometon
Triadimefon
Triforine

Category 4
Amitrole
Ammonium hydroxide
Benzalkonium chloride
Bioresmethrin
Bone oil
Boric acid
Brodifacoum
Bromacil
Carbetamide
Chlorbufam
Chlorophacinone

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 11 December 1990, if he will list all the pesticide active ingredients he *(a)* received, *(b)* approved and *(c)* rejected in 1990 and to date in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is set out below in respect of applications for pesticides submitted to this Ministry for approval by the six Departments responsible. Applications for which the Health and Safety Executive is not primarily responsible—non-agricultural pesticides—are not included.

	1990	*1991*
(a) Received (names are commercial in confidence)	7	3
(b) (i) Approved (provisional level)	6 deltamethrin fenoxyprop-ethyl cycloxydim PP321 fenpropathrin fenvalerate	2 teflubenzuron gluphosinate-ammonium
(ii) Approved (experimental permit)	1 oryzalin	

	1990	*1991*
(iii) Decisions deferred pending further data (names are commercial in confidence)	5	1
(c) Rejected	1 ethalfluralin	—
(d) Withdrawn (names are commercial in confidence)	4	1

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 16 January 1990, if he will list the active ingredients which have had their reviews concluded by the advisory committee on pesticides according to the categories *(a)* approval withdrawn, *(b)* use restricted and *(c)* use continues unchanged following their review since 16 January 1990, indicating if they were full or partial reviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Approvals withdrawn	P TBTO (some approvals) P Alphaichloralose—commodity substance approvals P Secanol—commodity substance approvals
(b) Use restricted or other amendments to approvals	P Vinclozolin F Diazinon F Toxynil F Bromoxynil P 2-aminobutane
(c) Use continues unchanged	F Maneb F Mancozeb F Nabam F Zineb F Zineb-ethylene-thiuram disulphide adduct

Note: P = partial.
F = full.

Marine Environment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies have been undertaken by his Department into the levels of *(a)* mercury pollution, *(b)* plutonium pollution and *(c)* polychlorinated biphenyl pollution in the Irish sea and their uptake by fish, dolphins and molluscs living in the region.

Mr. Curry: The results of the Department's monitoring of non-radioactive and radioactive contaminants, including mercury, plutonium and polychlorinated biphenyls, in fish and molluscs are regularly published in the aquatic environment monitoring reports (AEMR), copies of which are available in the Library of the House. AEMR No. 26, due to be published shortly, will describe work undertaken in 1988 and 1989. In addition to results on contaminants in fish and shellfish, it will contain a section summarising work on contaminants in marine mammals, including dolphins.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment has been made by his Department of the biogenic sulphur loading in the atmosphere arising from emissions from nutrient-enriched plankton in the North sea.

Mr. Curry: Dimethyl sulfide is believed to arise in surface water from the natural biochemistry of certain species of marine algae. We do not monitor specifically for sulfide loading. However, we have an annual nutrient monitoring programme in the North sea, and there is no evidence for enhanced algal production from nutrients of manmade origin in the open North sea.

Rabies

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional steps will be taken to prevent an escalation in incidents of rabies following the completion of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Maclean: Eurotunnel has implemented measures agreed with the Department to prevent the possible entry of rabies-susceptible animals while the tunnel is built. The state veterinary service and the Department's wildlife scientists have been fully involved in devising the measures to be used once the tunnel is operational. These have yet to be finalised, but will include the use of sealed trains, physical barriers and grids, and the continuous use of baited traps in the tunnel and terminal areas, together with vigorous cleaning and inspection procedures.

The planned control measures will ensure that the channel tunnel presents no greater rabies risk than other forms of cross-channel transport.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many quarantined animals have developed rabies in each year since 1970.

Mr. Maclean: Two animals developed rabies in quarantine in this period, one in 1983 and the other in 1990. None developed the disease after release from quarantine.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many non-organophosphorous compounds for the treatment of sheeps' coats are awaiting licence approval; how long they have been awaiting approval; and when he expects to make a decision on any of these preparations.

Mr. Maclean: Two applications for product licences in respect of non-organophosphorous compounds for sheep treatment were submitted to the veterinary medicines directorate in January 1990 and August 1990 respectively. Licences are issued under the Medicines Act only once a product has been demonstrated to be safe, of sound quality, and effective. We are unable to say when decisions on determining these applications will be taken.

DEFENCE

Tanks

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the possible leasing of Leopard tanks by the British Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: As Leopard 2 (improved) is a contender for Chieftain replacement, discussion on what may or may not be part of any particular offer would breach commercial confidentiality.

German Equipment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when in the last six months discussions have taken place with his German counterparts regarding the possible use by British forces of German equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend has had a number of discussions with Dr. Stoltenberg in the last six months, concerning a wide range of issues.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the specific performance targets set for the Meteorological Office following on from the initial targets he announced in 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: At column *444* on 2 April 1990, my right hon. Friend set out the initial targets set for the Meteorological Office. The performance achieved against these targets will be reported in the agency's annual report and accounts which will be available in the summer.

Following on from these initial targets I have set further specific and demanding targets for the period 1991-96. These are:

To improve efficiency by an average of 3 per cent. per annum.

To achieve a 50 per cent. increase in uptake of meteorological services, as measured by revenue generated from commercial services to the public, industry and commerce (excluding the Civil Aviation Authority).

To achieve a 170 per cent. increase in the gross contribution of commercial services revenue to offsetting core costs and overheads.

To reduce by 15 per cent. cumulatively the standard error of 48-hour forecasts of mid-tropospheric pressure fields over the North Atlantic and North West Europe.

To achieve high standards of quality and demonstrate a level of customer satisfaction with the services and products delivered. Quantified targets will be set annually for each major customer group.

To provide authoritative advice on climate change issues to Ministers nationally, and internationally through the auspices of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Central Television (Libel Actions)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contact there has been between officials of his Department and Messrs de Normann and Mackenzie Geidt regarding their libel actions against Central Television.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As a date has been set for a hearing it would not be appropriate to comment.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, further to his letter to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South of 23 May, he will give the name and title of the official with whom Mr. Mackenzie Geidt had an informed discussion in October 1989 following his return from Vietnam.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Strategic Objectives

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his precise global strategic objectives; and what exact manning levels for the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force he is proposing in order to meet those objectives.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The strategic environment in which the Government set defence policy and take decisions on the defence programme is set out each year in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" (SDE) which includes manpower statistics for the three services. As stated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the House on 30 April, we hope to publish SDE 91 before the summer recess.

Iraq (Nuclear Material)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent reports he has had from the International Atomic Energy Agency about Iraq's assurances on the amount of fissionable material *(a)* safely sealed and *(b)* destroyed during allied bombing; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to monitor radiation in the Tuwaitha area.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I have been asked to reply.

An IAEA team visited Iraq from 14-22 May to begin verification of Iraq's statements to the UN of its nuclear holdings. The IAEA has not made public the findings of its initial inspection. A confidential report will be submitted to the agency's board of governors, of which the United Kingdom is a member. Further inspections which may include the monitoring of radiation in the Tuwaitha area will be necessary to fulfil all the requirements of UNSCR 687.

The Gulf (Pollution)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research is being carried out into the effect of hydrocarbons released by oil fires on the cells of animals' bodies in Kuwait.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I have been asked to reply.

I am not aware of research on this particular topic but as I have already indicated to the hon. Member *(Official Report,* 28 March, column *458* and 17 April, column *183)* a comprehensive assessment of environmental damage caused by the conflict is now being carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Antares (Sinking)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the results of the Royal Navy inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the fishing vessel Antares.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have placed a summary of the main findings of the Royal Navy board of inquiry report into this tragic accident in the Library of the House today.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 7 June 1991

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Clothing Grants

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost of a non-discretionary school clothing grants scheme administered by his Department.

Mr. Fallon: The cost would depend on the scale and nature of any scheme. We have no plans to introduce such a scheme; it is for local authorities to decide, in the light of local circumstances, when and to what extent to provide clothing grants.

Official Visits

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what visits or other official engagements were undertaken by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science during his visit to the east Birmingham task force area on 23 April 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The programme included visits to the Aston Science Park, a meeting with Sir Reginald Eyre and Heartlands training group, attendance at the Heartlands training event, visit to the east Birmingham task force, East Birmingham college and attendance at the launch of the Asian business handbook.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the level of funding to the Natural Environment Research Council in each year since 1 April 1985.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Details of the level of grant in aid paid by this Department to the Natural Environment Research Council since 1 April 1985 are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	67·880
1986-87	70·325
1987-88	73·315
1988-89	91·859
1989-90	114·955
1990-91	135·233
[1]1991-92	122·564

[1] Estimates.

TRANSPORT

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are currently being taken to meet Government targets for the stabilisation of carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2005.

Mr. Chope: Over the past year or so, the Government have taken a number of initiatives which will help to reduce emissions from the transport sector. These include an emissions check in the MOT test, proposals to fit speed limiters to heavy goods vehicles, and improvements to information about new car fuel economy. The tax changes announced in the last Budget statement will also help to improve incentives to choose fuel efficient cars and drive them in a fuel economic fashion.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken for his Department to show how the Government will meet their target of stabilising carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2005; and if he will make available any forecasts and associated calculations.

Mr. Chope: My Department has published a report by Dr. M. H. L. Waters on "United Kingdom road transport's contribution to greenhouse gases: a review of TRRL and other research" (Transport and Road Research Laboratory contractor report 223.) This is being followed up by a programme of research into various measures which might help to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. Where appropriate, the results will be published in due course.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's traffic forecast for the next 15 years; how he estimates these will affect the Government's declared objective of stabilising carbon dioxide emission levels from 1990 by the year 2005; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department's traffic forecasts are published as National Road Traffic Forecasts (Great Britain) 1989 copies of which are in the Library. They indicate that by the year 2005 traffic will be 31 to 52 per cent. higher than in 1990. The impact of traffic levels on emissions of carbon dioxide will largely depend on the fuel efficiency of the vehicle fleet.

Great Glen Bypass

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made since 1987 in plans for the construction of the Great Glen bypass, Leicestershire, on the A6; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Following public consultation the preferred route for the A6 Great Glen bypass was announced in November 1989. Since that time surveys have been carried out leading to the detailed design of the scheme. We plan to publish draft orders in the autumn.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Residential Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living in residential and nursing homes are paid for by income support; and how many of these are over pension age.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest estimate of the number of people in receipt of income support in residential care and nursing homes is for August 1990, when the figure was 199,000. Information on how many of these were over

pension age is not available but, as of May 1989, about 80 per cent. of income support recipients in such homes were over pension age.

Community Charge (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many community charge payers in Lambeth were in receipt of community charge benefit at the last period for which figures were available, based on claims for refunds by his Department to Lambeth council.

Miss Widdecombe: As at 28 February 1991, it is estimated that 38,200 charge payers were receiving community charge benefit in the London borough of Lambeth. This figure is likely to understate the true position as, in addition to having a number of unprocessed claims, a computer-related problem prevented Lambeth from including certain cases in its February stock count.

Social Fund Reviews

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for review by a social fund inspector were outstanding for more than one month on 30 April.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 3 May 1991 at column *350*.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's policy on informing the next of kin of deceased unemployment benefit claimants of any outstanding benefits to which they are entitled; and if he will make a statement on the considerations leading to the formulation of this policy.

Mr. Jack: When a claimant dies, any outstanding unemployment benefit may be paid to persons claiming that benefit as legal personal representatives, legatees, next of kin or creditors of the deceased. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the individuals mentioned to make sure that any outstanding benefit has been claimed. However, following the hon. Member's question, steps are being taken to ensure that in administering unemployment benefit on a day to day basis instructions to employment service offices properly reflect this policy intention and that, where a legal personal representative or next of kin notifies the ESO that a claimant has died, an invitation to claim any arrears will be issued. Instructions to staff in offices of the Benefits Agency will also be reviewed to ensure that similar procedures are followed where this is not already the case.

Information regarding the payment of arrears of benefit following a death can be obtained from offices of the Department of Social Security and unemployment benefit offices. In addition, advice on claiming arrears of benefit is included in social security leaflet D49, "What to do After a Death", which contains detailed information on the action to be taken when someone dies.

Disposable Income

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing disposable income in and out of work, after 16 weeks, for a single-wage family with two children aged four and six years and a mortgage of *(a)* £50,000 *(b)* £75,000 and *(c)* £100,000 assuming offer wages of £200, £250, £300, £350, £400, £450 and £500 a week.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 20 May 1991]:* The information is set out in the table. The figures are based on the following assumptions.

Mortgage payments are for interest only and contain no repayments of capital. Where an income support claimant's outgoings are unnecessarily high they may be restricted to the amount that they would need to obtain suitable alternative accommodation. In the table, it has been assumed that no such restriction has been applied. They are shown net of tax. The mortgage shown is the capital outstanding. Mortgage interest is calculated at 12·95 per cent.

In calculating the figures the same assumptions have been used as are found in the tax benefit model tables. Net income in work includes child benefit and any community charge benefit as may be payable. It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large.

Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6

Gross Pay (£pw)	*Net income in work after mortgage and community charge (£pw)*			*Net income on income support after mortgage and community charge (£pw)*
	mortgage £50,000	*mortgage £75,000*	*mortgage £100,000*	
200	60·84	−1·42	−63·68	101·22
250	93·84	31·58	−30·68	101·22
300	126·84	64·58	2·32	101·22
350	159·84	97·58	35·32	101·22
400	197·34	135·08	72·82	101·22
450	234·84	172·58	110·32	101·22
500	272·34	210·08	147·82	101·22

HOME DEPARTMENT

Iraqi Detainees

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to publish the report prepared by the Red Cross on prison conditions under which the Iraqi detainees in the United Kingdom were kept during the course of the Gulf war.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold: No. The convention is that such reports are made available only to the Government of the detaining country and to the national Government of those detained, and in confidence.

Racial Attacks

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been made to each police authority in England and Wales in the past year regarding improper handling of an offence caused by racial prejudice.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not held centrally and may only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Police Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will describe the procedures used by the Metropolitan police when disclosing criminal records to local authorities to allow them to determine who is a fit and proper person to hold a taxi licence; whether he will list the offences deemed to make a taxi driver unfit to hold a taxi licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice of the Metropolitan police to disclose criminal records to local authorities for this purpose.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has issued advice to local authorities concerning the use of criminal records to determine on who is a fit and proper person to hold a taxi licence; what appeals procedure there is should a criminal record be inaccurate or not relevant to a taxi licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has not issued any such advice to local authorities. Anyone aggrieved by the refusal of a district council to issue a licence may appeal to the courts.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many successful prosecutions there have been in each of the past five years under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 relating to having an unmuzzled ferocious dog at large in a street, park or open public place;

(2) how many successful prosecutions there have been in each of the past five years under the Animals Act 1971 for injury or damage caused by dogs in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table shows the number of prosecutions and convictions under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 Section 28(2) to (4).

Number of defendants prosecuted and convicted under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 section 28(2) to (4) 1985 to 1989 England and Wales

Year	Prosecutions	Convictions
1985	55	28
1986	54	26
1987	52	37
1988	80	43
1989	93	60

Note: Information is not collected centrally on civil offences committed under the Animals Act 1971.

Control of Explosives

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of cases where explosives other than fireworks have caused accidents in the home in the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Accurate figures are not available. In 1989, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) drew my noble Friend's attention to an unfortunate accident in his constituency when a young boy was badly injured while playing with materials used in the home loading of ammunition.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bear the extra cost to the police of carrying out inspections under the proposed control of explosives regulations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The cost of operating the statutory enforcement powers to be conferred on the police as a result of the proposed control of explosives regulations, which should not result in a significant additional burden upon police resources, will be met by police funding in the usual way.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of cases in the last convenient period where explosives have been stolen from private homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no legal requirement to report thefts of explosives. Accurate figures for thefts from private homes are not available, but five are known to have been reported by police since 1969.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now postpone the control of explosives regulations to allow increased consultation time for the guidance notes to be fully studied by all interested parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not normal practice for the Health and Safety Executive to consult on guidance notes. They represent an explanation of the regulations and advice on compliance. The proposed control of explosives regulations have been subject to full consultation. We see no need for postponement.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long has been allowed for consultation on the form of the guidance notes applying to the new proposed control of explosives regulations; and what factors underlay the decision to set this length of time for consultation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No general consultation on draft guidance notes applying to the new proposed control of

explosives regulations has taken place. Draft guidance notes were sent to a number of organisations by the Health and Safety Executive on 3 May 1991. Comments were requested by 17 May 1991. This time was set to permit the guidance notes to be published prior to the draft regulations coming into force. However, important comments received after this date could be taken into account if printing schedules permitted.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the case histories that led to the proposal by the Health and Safety Executive of new control of explosive regulations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The new proposed control of explosives regulations are part of the ongoing modernisation of the Explosives Act 1875 and related regulations. This forms part of the Health and Safety Commission's programme of work to review and reform existing legislation. So far a number of new explosives regulations have been made. The draft control of explosives regulations are the latest proposals. These proposals are not driven by particular case histories.

Dog Fights

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester on the action taken in connection with publication of "Pit Bull News" by P. Graham from 44 Midland road, Bramhall, Stockport, in respect of possible offences related to promotion of organised dog fights.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of Greater Manchester police that the police are aware of the publication "Pit Bull News". Together with the RSPCA, they have looked into the possibility of prosecuting the publication for offences relating to the promotion of organised dog fights, but have concluded that there is insufficient evidence for a prosecution to proceed.

Sellafield (Security)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria as to the investigations being conducted into the break-in at the Sellafield site in the week beginning 20 May, and as to the security implications of these events.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The incident was handled by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary and Cumbria police were not involved.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service College

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what targets he has approved for the Civil Service College for 1991-92.

Mr. Renton: The primary target for the Civil Service College executive agency will be to cover its costs from income: planned costs for 1991-92 are £14,476K. Other agreed targets for the college in 1991-92 are:

	Targets
Student days	82,750
Course days	5,465
Students	20,900
Students at grade 7+	5,501
Number of students in development schemes	4,190
Number of students for formal qualifications	1,980
Number of students from the private sector	450
Percentage of course evaluations in boxes 1 and 2	78
Students per course day at the college's two main sites	16·5
Income from consultancy	£130K

There is also a target for "cost per student day" which is not published for commercial reasons, and a five-year value for money target. The rating of college services as revealed by a detailed survey of the views of students must increase over the five-year period to 1995 by 10 per cent. more than the real cost of the college's output.

I am arranging for copies of the college's stategic plan for 1991-1995 to be placed in the Libraries of the Houses of Parliament.

EMPLOYMENT

Redundancies

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average time for his Department to process redundancies; how many redundancies are awaiting processing; and whether there are any plans to recruit extra staff to increase efficiency.

Mr. Forth: The average time to process a redundancy payment is currently 10 weeks and the number of claims awaiting processing is 53,000. My Department has introduced a number of efficiency measures to improve the time taken to deal with claims, including the recruitment of additional staff.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made of the effect on employment of the introduction of a minimum wage based on two thirds of male median earnings.

Mr. Forth: Officials in my Department have estimated that the introduction of a minimum wage of two thirds male median earnings could over time lead to the loss of over 1 million jobs if wage differentials were restored by 50 per cent. They have also estimated that in the extreme case of full wage restoration the losses could be of the order of 2 million jobs.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what would be the cost to the public sector wages and salaries bill of the introduction of a minimum wage of two thirds of male median earnings.

Mr. Forth: We do not have the information to provide a full answer, and even a partial answer could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Employment Training

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money is set aside for employment training in each English county.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1991-92 budgets were allocated by funding block rather than by individual scheme. Funding block 2 includes employment training (ET) fees, ET allowances and high technology national training (HTNT). The table below shows the money allocated to each regional office in England for funding block 2:

Region	*Allocation £ million*
South East	57·25
London	93·02
South West	46·51
West Midlands	89·88
East Midlands	67·75
Yorkshire and Humberside	100·49
North West	123·93
Northern	82·63

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action the Health and Safety Executive is taking in respect of the drafting of regulations for the storage of *(a)* propane or butane gas, *(b)* petrol and *(c)* weed killer, in the home.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Commission's current reviews of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 and regulations concerning the storage of petrol in containers include consideration of the domestic storage of liquefied petroleum gas and petrol respectively.

The storage of weed killer in the home is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who has no plans to produce regulations on such storage.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the role of the Health and Safety Executive in respect of safety in private domestic premises as proposed in the new draft of the Control of Explosives Regulations; and on what section of which Act this role is based.

Mr. Forth: None. The Health and Safety Commission has proposed new draft control of explosives regulations to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The police will be the enforcing authority for most requirements in the proposals; the Health and Safety Executive for others. The proposed new regulations give the Health and Safety Executive no role in respect of safety in domestic premises.

Training (Finance)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding reductions in funding for people on training schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: A number of hon. Members have written to me about funding for training, including the hon. Member for Truro. It is for training and enterprise councils to allocate funding to training schemes locally. Nationally resources for youth training and employment training now stand at over £1·7 billion for 1991-92. Following a reappraisal of the range of measures available to help unemployed people and a reassessment of the overall demand for ET adjustments were made to the balance of our measures involving an increase in the number of opportunities delivered through the Employment Service.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been set aside for the purchase of tools to enable the unemployed to gain skilled employment.

Mr. Jackson: No money has been allocated specifically for the purchase of tools for this purpose.

Skills Training

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Government have to provide training for people aged over 25 years in skills necessary to gain employment, including interview skills, literacy and numeracy.

Mr. Jackson: The Government aim to offer to all adults under 50 who have been unemployed for more than two years, and to all unemployed people with disabilities, a place on employment training (ET), enterprise allowance, the job interview guarantee or in a job-club. Many people who need the help described will be included in this group. Other people who need help with literacy/numeracy are eligible to enter ET without being unemployed for 26 weeks.

Job preparation courses are offered as part of the job interview guarantee initiative and are designed to give long-term unemployed people the knowledge and confidence to succeed at a guaranteed interview for vacancies offered at the end of the course.

The Government have recently announced sponsorship of £3 million over the next three years for a new initiative called "Basic Skills at Work" intended to enhance the quantity and quality of literacy/numeracy training.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people of employment age are on literacy and numeracy training courses; and if he will give these figures for each English county;

(2) what money is available for each English county for people with special training needs in literacy, numeracy and social skills; and what the figures were for 1990.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sri Lanka

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much grant aid has been provided for Sri Lanka during each of the past five years; and if he will increase grant aid for next year.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is being provided to Sri Lanka in this financial year; and what was the figure in each of the previous three years.

Mrs. Chalker: I will write to the hon. Members.

HEALTH

Cancer

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths have been recorded in Gwynedd caused by cancer in each of the past five years; what incidence rate the figure for each year represents; how that rate corresponds to the figure for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain in each of those years; and if he will break down the total number of cancer deaths in each year into convenient age groups.

Mr. Dorrell: The tables list the number of deaths, and rates per 1,000 population, from malignant neoplasms (ICD 140-208) for the years 1986-90, in Gwynedd, Wales and Great Britain. The data are presented in convenient age groups.

Deaths from malignant neoplasms, ICD 140-208 in Great Britain, Wales and Gwynedd. 1986-90.

Age	*Great Britain*		*Wales*		*Gwynedd*	
	Deaths	*Rate per 1,000 population*	*Deaths*	*Rate per 1,000 population*	*Deaths*	*Rate per 1,000 population*
1986						
Under 1	17	0·02	2	0·05	0	0·00
1–4	122	0·04	7	0·05	1	0·09
5–14	269	0·04	10	0·03	2	0·07
15–24	515	0·06	24	0·05	1	0·03
25–34	1,125	0·14	69	0·19	6	0·21
35–44	3,630	0·48	196	0·52	13	0·44
45–54	9,994	1·66	500	1·63	40	1·61
55–64	29,070	4·87	1,648	5·18	132	5·01
65–74	48,679	9·95	2,604	9·73	243	10·01
75–84	45,853	15·78	2,412	15·72	241	15·36
85 and over	14,348	20·62	656	18·46	72	18·56
All ages	153,622	2·78	8,128	2·88	751	3·20
1987						
Under 1	20	0·03	0	0·00	0	0·00
1–4	116	0·04	5	0·03	1	0·09
5–14	249	0·04	9	0·03	0	0·00
15–24	480	0·05	18	0·04	3	0·08
25–34	1,148	0·14	52	0·14	4	0·13
35–44	3,717	0·49	183	0·48	22	0·74
45–54	9,971	1·66	535	1·73	54	2·15
55–64	28,473	4·85	1,574	5·03	122	4·68
65–74	48,722	9·89	2,616	9·67	257	10·55
75–84	47,198	15·98	2,474	15·86	262	16·60
85 and over	15,324	20·54	786	20·31	90	21·26
All ages	155,418	2·81	8,252	2·91	815	3·45
1988						
Under 1	19	0·03	2	0·05	1	0·34
1–4	135	0·05	6	0·04	0	0·00
5–14	266	0·04	17	0·05	1	0·03
15–24	534	0·06	15	0·03	1	0·03
25–34	1,125	0·14	53	0·13	2	0·06
35–44	3,838	0·50	200	0·52	14	0·46
45–54	9,999	1·64	550	1·75	45	1·76
55–64	27,921	4·81	1,481	4·77	111	4·24
65–74	49,130	9·99	2,821	10·38	247	10·12
75–84	48,154	16·10	2,546	16·09	258	16·23
85 and over	16,117	20·63	864	21·23	105	23·50
All ages	157,238	2·83	8,555	2·99	785	3·28
1989						
Under 1	22	0·03	0	0·00	0	0·00
1–4	146	0·05	7	0·05	0	0·00
5–14	228	0·03	13	0·04	2	0·07
15–24	485	0·06	30	0·07	1	0·03
25–34	1,107	0·13	37	0·09	7	0·21
35–44	3,807	0·50	196	0·51	25	0·82
45–54	9,992	1·60	529	1·65	45	1·72
55–64	26,985	4·70	1,448	4·71	133	5·10
65–74	48,903	9·96	2,790	10·21	253	10·33
75–84	49,504	16·33	2,631	16·35	284	17·70
85 and over	17,177	20·95	871	20·45	95	20·25
All ages	158,356	2·85	8,552	2·98	845	3·51
1990						
Under 1	13	0·02	1	0·03	1	0·34
1–4	109	0·04	4	0·03	0	0·00
5–14	271	0·04	13	0·04	4	0·14
15–24	420	0·05	22	0·05	0	0·00
25–34	1,109	0·13	46	0·11	7	0·21
35–44	3,702	0·48	187	0·49	18	0·59

Age	Great Britain Deaths	Great Britain Rate per 1,000 population	Wales Deaths	Wales Rate per 1,000 population	Gwynedd Deaths	Gwynedd Rate per 1,000 population
45–54	9,956	1·57	552	1·69	48	1·84
55–64	26,494	4·65	1,417	4,65	118	4·53
65–74	48,636	9·94	2,738	9·96	250	10·21
75–84	49,416	16·20	2,591	15·90	260	16·20
85 and over	17,654	20·92	868	19·73	91	19·39
All ages	157,780	2·83	8,439	2·92	797	3·31

Note: 1990 rates for Gwynedd based on 1989 population for all ages.

Cervical Cancer

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of research into a vaccine for cervical cancer; and what funds are being made available by his Department for such research.

Mr. Dorrell: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. I understand that no research into this subject is currently being undertaken by the MRC.

The Department's view is that although some strains of human papilloma virus, against which such a vaccine would be used, may pre-dispose to the development of cervical cancer, there is no absolute proof that it does.

It is not normal practice to contemplate developing a vaccine unless there is clear proof that the infectious agent against which the vaccine is directed has been proved to cause the condition under consideration.

Population Statistics

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current population of England, Scotland and Wales who are aged 18 years or over.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated resident populations aged 18 years and over at 30 June 1990 were as follows:

	Million
England	37·00
Scotland	3·94
Wales	2·22

HIV (Blood Transfusions)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had from Mr. Graham Ross in regard to financial help for NHS patients who have become infected with HIV through infected blood transfusions, and their families; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he has taken or will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) on 6 June at column *302*.

Sefton General Hospital

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will direct the Liverpool area health authority to publish its plans for the future of Sefton general hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: No. The planning and development of health services locally is a matter for the health authority concerned. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Michael Emberton, the chairman of Liverpool health authority.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will itemise land and property sales by Trent regional health authority between 1987 and 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in respect of sales of over £50,000 and over 1 acre in area is given in the tables.

Trent Regional Health Authority

District health authority—Property and address	Price obtained (£)
1987-88	
Leicestershire—Francis Dixon Lodge, Towers Hospital	280,000
Leicestershire—Glengate Hospital, Desford	420,000
North Derbyshire—Ridgway Hospital, Belper	200,000
North Derbyshire—Land at Penmore Hospital, Chesterfield (Phase 1)	229,750
North Lincolnshire—Louth and District Hospital	305,000
Nottingham—Coppice Hospital, Ransom Road	450,000
Rotherham—Land at rear of Fairfield House	340,000
South Derbyshire—The Grange Children's Unit, Etwall Road, Mickleover and adjoining land	90,000
South Derbyshire—Rough Heanor Allotments, Kingsway Hospital	475,000
South Derbyshire—Derbyshire Hospital for Women	403,000
South Derbyshire—Ilkeston General Hospital	385,000
1988-89	
Barnsley—Land at Broadway Ambulance Station	52,000
Central Nottingham—Dale Crescent, Balderton	932,500
Central Nottingham—Langwith Lodge	620,000
Leicestershire—Bosworth Park Infirmary	1,500,006
Leicestershire—Land at LeicesterGeneral	2,670,000
Leicestershire—Welford Road Ambulance Station	585,900
North Derbyshire—Land at Penmore Hospital	257,296
North Derbyshire—Penmore Hospital	60,000
North Derbyshire—Carbar Hall, Buxton	150,000
North Derbyshire—Dronfield Hospital	363,000
North Lincolnshire—St. Mark's House	51,000
Nottingham—Land at Highbury Hospital	591,200
Nottingham—Saxondale Hospital	767,000
Nottingham—Clarendon Street	612,000
Sheffield—Edgar Allen Poe TC	70,590
Sheffield—Clifford Road	268,000
South Derbyshire—Derwent Hospital	658,333
South Derbyshire—Makeney Hospital	541,100
South Derbyshire—Etwall Hospital	676,000
South Lincolnshire—Johnson Hospital	325,000
1989-90	
Barnsley—Land at Bolton on Dearne HC	121,100
Barnsley—Pinder Oaks	105,000
Bassetlaw—49 and 51 The Holdings	80,000
Central Nottingham—Collingham Health Centre	225,000
Doncaster—Land at Neston Hospital	175,000

District health authority—Property and address	*Price obtained (£)*
Leicestershire—Welford Road Ambulance Station	390,130
Leicestershire—Courtesthorpe Health Centre	350,000
Leicestershire—67 Coventry Road	440,000
North Derbyshire—Penmore Hospital	540,000
North Lincolnshire—St. John's Hospital	4,641,508
North Lincolnshire—2 Ancaster Avenue	67,000
Nottingham—Saxondale Hospital	6,848,000
Nottingham—54 and 56 The Ropewalk	516,000
Rotherham—Ferham House	148,500
South Derbyshire—Ashbourne Maternity Home	535,250
South Derbyshire—Heanor Maternity Hospital	150,000
South Lincolnshire—Oldleake Health Centre, Boston	120,000
Trent RHA—Markfield Training Centre	1,750,000
1990-91	
Bassetlaw—Larwood Health Centre	220,000
Leicestershire—Humberstone Grange Cottage	60,000
Leicestershire—40 Thumaston Lane	176,500
Leicestershire—Land at Carlton Hayes Hospital	15,900,000
Leicestershire—Kibworth Hall Hospital	675,000
Leicestershire—Framland Hospital	540,000
Leicestershire—Fielding Johnson Hospital	1,130,000
North Derbyshire—178 Broomhill Road	170,000
North Lincolnshire—Land at Birchwood Health Centre	50,000
North Lincolnshire—St. John's Hospital (Stage 1)	450,000
Nottingham—Radcliffe-on-Trent Health Centre	205,000
Sheffield—73 Lightwood Lane	53,500
Sheffield—Land at Chapeltown Nursing Home	120,000
Sheffield—7 Leopold Street	475,000
Sheffield—74 Lightwood Lane	50,000
Sheffield—471 Redmires Road	50,000
Sheffield—33 Clifford Road/14 St. Andrews	184,000
South Derbyshire—7 Hospital Lane, Mickleover	52,200
South Derbyshire—Manor/Kingsway Hospital (Phase 1)	1,275,000
South Lincolnshire—13 Rushcliffe Road	56,333

Regrading Appeals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give his latest figures for the number of outstanding nurse regrading appeals at regional and at national level for each health district or NHS trust in *(a)* Yorkshire regional health authority and *(b)* Trent regional health authority; and when he expects all the regrading appeals to be completed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 31 May 1991 the number of regional clinical grading appeals in Trent regional health authority and Yorkshire regional health authority was as follows:

Regional Health Authority	*Number of appeals outstanding*
Yorkshire	1,242
Trent	1,416

Information about regional appeals outstanding for each district or NHS trust in these regions is not available centrally.

At 31 May 1991 the number of national clinical grading appeals outstanding in Trent regional health authority and Yorkshire regional health authority was as follows:

	Number outstanding
Yorkshire	
District	
Calderdale	1
Dewsbury	1
East Yorkshire	1
Harrogate	1
Hull	1
Pontefract	11
Wakefield	6
York	5
Trent	
District	
Barnsley	1
Central Nottinghamshire	3
Nottingham	1
Sheffield	4

These figures include appeals outstanding in NHS trusts.

We cannot predict when all the regrading appeals will be completed, but every effort is made to process cases as quickly as possible within the currently agreed procedures.

East Birmingham Hospital

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why he has appointed Mr. John Bettinson to be chairman of the trust for East Birmingham hospital before the end of the consultation period for the proposal to establish a trust for this hospital.

Mr. Waldegrave: NHS trust chairmen and non-executive directors cannot be formally appointed until an NHS trust is established. Our current programme for second-wave NHS trusts envisages formal establishment in the autumn of this year. The names of the chairmen will be provided around the same time.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the applications received for approval in the second wave of NHS trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is as follows:

Formal applications approved for consultation in the second wave of trusts

Northern RHA

Cleveland Ambulance Services
Gateshead Community Unit
Northgate Hospital Northumberland Services
Derwentside (North West Durham Hospital and Community Unit)
North Tees Acute and Community Services
Royal Victoria Infirmary and Dental Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne
South Tees Acute Hospital Services

Yorkshire RHA

Airedale Health Services
Bradford Mental Health and Community Services
Harrogate Health Services
Northallerton Health Services
Scarborough Health Services
York Health Services

Trent RHA

Barnsley Community and Priority Services Unit
City Hospital Nottingham
Nottingham Community Unit
Mulberry Health Care Services (South Lincolnshire Mental Handicap Services)
Central Sheffield University Hospital (South Sheffield

Hospitals)
South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Services
Weston Park Hospital, Sheffield
Bassetlaw Hospital and Community Services
Children's Hospital Sheffield
Doncaster Priority and Community Services

East Anglian RHA
Allington (East Suffolk Community Unit)
Hinchingbrooke (Huntingdon Acute, Hinchingbrooke Hospital)
King's Lynn and Wisbech (QE2 Hospital)

North West Thames RHA
Barnet Community Health Services
Wellhouse (Barnet and Edgeware Hospitals)
Ealing Acute Hospital
East Hertfordshire Acute, Priority and Community Services
Northwick Park Hospital (Harrow Acute Unit)
Harrow Community Services
Hillingdon Community Health Unit
North West Hertfordshire Mental Handicap Unit
Parkside Community Health Services Unit
South Bedfordshire Community and Mental Health Services
Bedford Hospital (South Bedfordshire General Hospitals)
St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington
Ashford Acute (Hounslow and Spelthorne)
Luton and Dunstable Hospital

North East Thames RHA
Basildon and Thurrock General Hospitals
Essex Ambulance Services
Mid Essex Hospital Services
Essex Rivers Healthcare
North East Essex Mental Handicap Unit (Turner Village)
North East Essex Mental Illness Unit (Severalls Hospital)
Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital
Southend Community Care Services
Forest Healthcare

South East Thames RHA
Brighton Community and Mental Health Services
King's Healthcare Trust (Camberwell)
Eastbourne Acute Services
Hastings Provider Services
Optimum Health (Lewisham Community)
Mid-Kent Healthcare Services (Maidstone Acute)
Maidstone Priority Care Services
Thameslink Healthcare (Dartford and Gravesham Priority Services)
Princess Christian (Tunbridge Wells Mental Handicap Unit)
West Lambeth Priority Services

South West Thames RHA
Frimley Park Hospital
Mid Surrey Mental Handicap Unit
North West Surrey Acute Unit
North West Surrey Community Services

Wessex RHA
Bath District (Mental Health Unit)
Bournemouth and Christchurch Acute Unit
Poole Acute Unit
East Dorset Community Services
Royal United Hospital, Bath
Wiltshire Healthcare (Bath and Wiltshire)
Avon and Somerset Community Unit

Oxford RHA
Aylesbury Vale Priority Care Services Unit
East Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit
Horton General Hospital
Milton Keynes Acute and Maternity Services Unit
Milton Keynes Community and Mental Health Services Unit
West Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit
Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospital
South Bucks (Wycombe Health Services)

South Western RHA
Avon Ambulance Services
Royal Cornwall Hospitals (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Acute Hospitals)
Frenchay Acute and Community Services
Plymouth Community Unit
Southmead Acute and Community Services
Gloucestershire Ambulance Services

West Midlands RHA
Coventry Walsgrave Health Services
East Birmingham Acute
Herefordshire Community Services Unit
South East Staffordshire Community and Mental Health Unit
South Warwickshire Community and Handicap Services Unit
Staffordshire Ambulance Services

Mersey RHA
Aintree Hospitals (Walton and Fazakerly)
Liverpool Community and Priority Services
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Unit
Mersey Regional Ambulance Services (Mersey Metropolitan Ambulance Services)
Mersey Regional Centre for Radiotherapy and Oncology
Mersey Regional Centre for Neurosciences
St. Helens and Knowsley Community Unit
Southport Acute Unit (Southport and Formby)

North Western RHA
Burnley Provider Unit
Oldham Acute and Community Services
Rochdale Acute and Community Services
Lancaster Acute Hospital Services
Lancaster Priority Services
Wrightington Health Services

Post-registration Education

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are being made to fund both training and time off for training under the post-registration education and practice project.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The post-registration education and practice project has been undertaken by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC). I understand that the UKCC has just completed consultation with the professions on the project report and that it plans to discuss the outcome with the United Kingdom Health Departments in due course. Any specific proposals addressed to the Health Departments will be considered at the appropriate time.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department has on the links between abortion and subsequent sterility or reproductive complications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The most recent information that the Department has comes from a major study we have funded of the short and long-term sequelae of abortion. The researchers, who have presented some of their recent findings orally at conferences have concluded that overall, abortion was not materially related to future fertility. However, the findings showed lower fertility in women who had induced abortion in their first pregnancy, as measured in the time it took to conceive again. It was also shown that induced abortion does not increase the risk of non-viable outcome, decreased birthweight of the baby or shortened gestation in the subsequent pregnancy, although certain features of the abortion operation may affect the outcome.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the national health service over the last year for which figures are available of *(a)* abortions performed within the national health service, *(b)* abortions contracted out by the national health service, *(c)* pre-abortion counselling and preparation, *(d)* post-abortion counselling, *(e)* treatment following abortions and *(f)* other costs associated with abortion in the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated revenue cost of a straightforward abortion as an in-patient in a national health service hospital is £250 in 1989-90 prices. The other information is not collected centrally.

PRIME MINISTER

Middle East (Arms Control)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what recent consultations Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Government concerning the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the middle east.

The Prime Minister: We worked closely with the United States Government and other members of the United Nations Security Council in the preparation of Security Council resolution 687, which specifically refers to the need to work towards the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the middle east. President Bush's recent initiative, if implemented, would be an important step towards that objective.

Special Forces

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what questions Her Majesty's Government have answered relating to special forces since November 1990.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 24 January at column *317* and on 21 March 1991 at column *230* and by me on 17 May 1991 at column *281* and 20 May at column *333*.

National Security

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether GCHQ, or Cleave station, Warminster has undertaken surveillance of any communications in order to assist criminal or civil investigations or to aid the enforcement of court orders since 1979;

(2) whether GCHQ, or Cleave station, Warminster has undertaken surveillance of any communications for purposes other than national security since 1979;

(3) what provisions are in place to prevent the dissemination of information gathered at GCHQ, or Cleave station, Warminster, in cases other than those representing a clear danger to national security.

The Prime Minister: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to discuss the work of the intelligence services. The dissemination of intercepted information is governed by safeguards under the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

NUM

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will request the commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 to report on allegations of the use of intercepted material in pursuit of the enforcement of court orders against the National Union of Mineworkers.

The Prime Minister: No.

Foreign Visits (Journalists)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column 34, if he will list by date of journey and newspaper those accounts for journalists travelling on official transport provided for Prime ministerial visits abroad which remained unsettled as of 3 June.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* It is not my practice to give details of outstanding accounts.

WALES

Motorways

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of *(a)* motorway and *(b)* near-motorway standard trunk road have been started in Wales in each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of miles of major new construction involving motorway and dual carriageway trunk roads started in Wales for each year since 1979 are given in the following table:

	Motorway standard	*Dual carriageway*
1979-80	—	14·5
1980-81	2·7	3·1
1981-82	—	22·8
1982-83	—	14·4
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	5·9
1985-86	—	16·5
1986-87	—	9·5
1987-88	—	7·6
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	3·0	7·1
1990-91	—	3·9
	5·7	105·3

Cancer

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what investigations have been commissioned by his Department during the past four years into the level of cancer incidence in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: An investigation of data relating to the incidence of cancers in north Wales over the period 1974 to 1983 was undertaken at the invitation of the Welsh Office by Professor Hubert Campbell, emeritus professor of medical statistics, university of Wales. The results were published in July 1988.

"Cancer Registration in Wales: 1974-1984", published in 1988, contained a comprehensive analysis of cancer incidence in Wales based on information held on the

Welsh Cancer Registry in respect of the years 1974 to 1984. A further report of the Welsh Cancer Registry, which will include data for 1984 to 1986, is currently being prepared.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further steps he proposes taking to improve cancer services for people residing in Gwynedd.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Consultation on the wide-ranging recommendations in the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells report into cancer treatment services for north Wales produced numerous and varying responses. These are being considered and an announcement will be made in due course.

Sheep

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating the number of farms in Wales affected by the sheep movement prohibition resulting from the Chernobyl disaster, in each year since that disaster occurred, together with an estimate of the number of sheep involved in each year.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is given in the following table:

Date	*Approximate number of holdings*	*Approximate number of sheep (post-lambing)*
20 June 1986[1]	5,100	2,000,000
1 January 1987	315	225,000
1 January 1988[2]	416	300,000
1 January 1989	416	300,000
1 January 1990	416	300,000
14 January 1991[3]	410	292,000

[1] Date of first Statutory Instrument imposing restrictions.
[2] Some re-restriction was necessary during 1987 on about 2 per cent. of those holdings released from restriction during 1986.
[3] Date of most recent Statutory Instrument derestricting part of the restricted area.

Right-to-buy

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the number of households currently on right-to-buy housing waiting lists in each district council area in Wales and the latest available figures showing the average amount of time spent by applicants on such waiting lists in each district authority.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of households on right-to-buy waiting lists at the end of March 1991, the latest available dates, are given in the following table.

Information regarding the average amount of time spent by applicants on right-to-buy waiting lists is not collected centrally.

District	*Applications outstanding*
Aberconwy	52
Alyn and Deeside	121
Arfon	107
Blaenau Gwent	50
Brecknock	121
Cardiff	2,263
Carmarthen	121
Ceredigion	283
Colwyn	0
Cynon Valley	353
Delyn	18
Dinefwr	80
Dwyfor	61
Glyndwr	40
Islwyn	135
Llanelli	692
Lliw Valley	80
Meirionnydd	103
Merthyr Tydfil	76
Monmouth	270
Montgomeryshire	78
Neath	160
Newport	575
Ogwr	349
Port Talbot	273
Preseli Pembrokeshire	30
Radnorshire	0
Rhondda	55
Rhuddlan	47
Rhymney Valley	978
South Pembrokeshire	63
Swansea	382
Taff-Ely	361
Torfaen	496
Vale of Glamorgan	174
Wrexham Maelor	665
Ynys Mon	193
Wales	9,905

Music Teaching

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications for the provision of peripatetic music teaching in the schools of south Glamorgan of the introduction of local management of schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We attach great value to the music service in schools and are anxious to see it continuing. Nevertheless, we do not believe that valuable provision of this sort will be threatened if local education authorities decide to delegate the funds to schools. Parents will want to see music provision maintained in the schools that their children attend and so will governors.

Unruly Children

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales where in Wales, when the Children Act comes into operation, children subject to unruliness certificates can be accommodated.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Secure units at Ty Mawr, Silverbrook and Llwyncelyn community homes; and Cardiff and Swansea prisons. This matter is covered in the review of secure care policy in Wales which has been undertaken and which is to be issued for consultation next month.

Children's Homes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why copies of the Welsh Office report on three children's homes in Wales published on 4 June were not placed in the Library; why they were not made immediately available to hon. Members via the Vote Office; and whether he will make immediate arrangements for them to be placed in Library and to be made available at the Vote Office.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Copies of the reports were placed in the Library of the House on 5 June and have been provided to the hon. Gentleman. Copies are freely available from the Welsh Office.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Recycled Paper (HMSO)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of Her Majesty's Stationery Office documents are printed on recycled paper; and what plans he has to increase the percentage.

Mr. Maples: To calculate the proportion of HMSO documents printed on recycled paper would be possible only at disproportionate cost.

HMSO actively encourages increased usage of recycled paper. Currently initiatives includes trials of recycled copier paper, computer stationery and recycled paper for tinted forms.

A catalogue has been issued highlighting the availability of environmentally friendly products.

Mortgage Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by region in tabular form and at constant prices the average monthly domestic mortgage payment payable in the month when interest rates were at their lowest since 1983, the current average mortgage payable and the difference between the two figures.

Mr. Maude: Information for average new mortgages in the second quarter of 1988 is in the table. Details of average amounts outstanding on all mortgages by region are not available.

Region	*Average new building society mortgages Quarter 2 1988*	*Monthly interest payments*[1] *On (A) at June 1988 9·8 per cent. interest rate, inflated to 1991 prices*[2]	*On (A) at current 12·9 per cent. interest rate*	*Difference (C)-(B)*
	(A) £	*(B)* £	*(C)* £	£
Northern region	22,200	169·78	178·99	9·21
Yorkshire and Humberside	23,000	175·90	185·44	9·54
East Midlands	27,000	206·49	217·69	11·20
East Anglia	34,800	278·37	293·48	15·10
Greater London	54,900	483·33	509·55	26·22
South East	44,500	377·28	397·75	20·47
South West	34,900	279·39	294·55	15·16
West Midlands	28,100	214·90	226·56	11·66
North West	24,300	185·84	195·92	10·08
Wales	23,900	182·78	192·69	9·92
Scotland	24,200	185·07	195·11	10·04
Northern Ireland	24,300	185·84	195·92	10·08
United Kingdom	32,900	259·00	273·05	14·05

[1] Assuming endowment mortgage, net of basic rate tax relief.
[2] Inflated from June 1988 to April 1991 prices by reference to the movement in the RPI.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to ensure that the price of unleaded petrol is contained to make its use attractive to private motorists; and if he will publish an analysis of the cost of this petrol throughout the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Measures taken in the Budget increased the tax advantage of unleaded over leaded petrol to more than 4 pence a litre (18·4p per gallon). The Government neither have nor seek the power to intervene directly in commercial price setting, but are determined to maintain a free market where the consumer is best served by unfettered competition between the oil companies. Pump prices of unleaded petrol at locations throughout the United Kingdom are published in the *Petroleum Times* energy report, copies of which are available in the Library.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Luxembourg on 3 June. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed a Presidency package of proposals on VAT and excise rates and systems, the most important elements of which were a minimum standard VAT rate of 15 per cent., minimum rates for all excises and provision for reduced rates including protection for our own zero rates. There was no agreement on the package as a whole and discussion will resume on 10 June.

In the discussion of VAT rates, I restated the Government's view that the centrally imposed approximation of tax rates was not necessary for the establishment of the single market, but I made a statement that the United Kingdom had no present intention of reducing the standard rate of VAT below the 15 per cent. minimum proposed by the Presidency or indeed of making any change to the current rate of VAT of 17·5 per cent.

On excise duties, I argued that, for health reasons, we needed to agree either high minimum rates for the duties on alcohol and tobacco, or limits on the amounts of these goods which can be brought into any member state tax-paid, and I said that the United Kingdom would in principle be prepared to accept a minimum rate for diesel

duty which would not oblige us to make any changes to our present levels. Any final agreement will, of course, be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

In a brief discussion of export credits and tied aid I urged that the European Community should agree to the Helsinki 5 revised package for revision of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development export credit arrangement and of the Development Assistance Committee's draft agreements on tied aid.

Inland Revenue (Leaflet)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations have been made to the Inland Revenue by the Royal Mail about the wording of a leaflet advising taxpayers on payment methods; and what action has been taken as a result.

Mr. Maude: The Post Office recently asked the Inland Revenue for a meeting to discuss this subject, and this meeting will take place shortly.

P11D Forms

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *593*, what is his estimate of the yield from the outstanding P11D forms.

Mr. Maude: The additional yield from examination of the outstanding forms is estimated at £10·25 million.

Many of the forms on hand in April included benefits returned for earlier years and already covered by adjustments to tax codes.

Security Vetting, Northern Ireland

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many posts in the Inland Revenue in Northern Ireland are subject to reliability checks under the new procedures for security vetting announced by the Prime Minister on 24 July 1990.

Mr. Maude: Since the new procedures were introduced, no posts in the Inland Revenue have been the subject of reliability checks. All new recruits to Northern Ireland complete a security questionnaire which is the basis for counter-terrorist checks.

Investment Income

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of people with annual investment income over £3,000 in 1991-92 who are *(a)* over the age of 55 years, *(b)* women over the age of 60 years and *(c)* men over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 6 June 1991]*: Available information indicates that approximately 500,000 men aged over 65 and 500,000 women aged over 65 have investment income over £3,000 in 1991-92. I regret that information for those aged between 55 and 65 is not separately available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textiles

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* all investigations which the European Commission has made into state aids in textiles and clothing in the European Community since 1986 and the eventual outcome of those cases which have been resolved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the European Commission's annual competition policy reports (part 3, chapter 1 and the annexes to the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th reports on competition policy), copies of which are available in the Library of the House. These list all formal investigations opened by the European Commission into state aids, including those for textiles and clothing, and their outcome.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will refer bank margins on interest rates to the Office of Fair Trading for inquiry into the extent and effectiveness of competition.

Mr. Lilley: I would of course ask the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate any anti-competitive practices by banks of which I had evidence. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked his officials, with the Bank of England, to look into concerns which have been raised about bank lending and my regional offices have been arranging a number of meetings between banks and small businesses.

SCOTLAND

Health Service Pay

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number, in both absolute and percentage terms, of medical physics technicians, pharmacy technicians and medical photographers in each of the new pay scale categories.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An agreement concluded by the Professional and Technical Staffs "B" Whitley Council in September 1989 introduced a new pay and grading structure for various groups of technicians in the NHS. Medical physics, technicians, pharmacy technicians and medical photographers were assigned to one of the eight medical technical officer (MTO) grades which are assistant, senior assistant, trainee and grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Health boards have stated that on 30 September 1990 the number of staff formerly in these grades in each of the MTO grades is as set out in the following tables.

Number of medical physics technicians

	Grade 5	*Grade 4*	*Grade 3*	*Grade 2*	*Grade 1*	*Trainee*	*Senior assistant*	*Assistant*	*Total*
Scotland	14	42	140	102	31	12	0	2	343
CSA	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Argyll and Clyde	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant	Total
Ayrshire and Arran	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Borders	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forth Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grampian	0	3	9	4	2	1	0	0	19
Greater Glasgow	6	18	78	60	15	6	0	1	184
Highland	0	2	15	2	0	0	0	1	20
Lanarkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lothian	7	12	28	18	6	1	0	0	72
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tayside	1	7	8	16	7	3	0	0	42
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Percentage of total number of medical physics technicians

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant
Scotland	4·1	12·2	40·8	29·7	9·0	3·5	0·0	0·6
CSA	0·0	0·0	100·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Argyll and Clyde	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Ayrshire and Arran	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	50·0	50·0	0·0	0·0
Borders	0·0	0·0	33·3	66·7	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Dumfries and Galloway	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Fife	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Forth Valley	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Grampian	0·0	15·8	47·4	21·1	10·5	5·3	0·0	0·0
Greater Glasgow	3·3	9·8	42·4	32·6	8·2	3·3	0·0	0·5
Highland	0·0	10·0	75·0	10·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	5·0
Lanarkshire	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Lothian	9·7	16·7	38·9	25·0	8·3	1·4	0·0	0·0
Orkney	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Shetland	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Tayside	2·4	16·7	19·0	38·1	16·7	7·1	0·0	0·0
Western Isles	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

Number of pharmacy technicians

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant	Total
Scotland	0	2	24	85	124	76	0	3	314
CSA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Argyll and Clyde	0	0	0	4	9	1	0	0	14
Ayrshire and Arran	0	0	3	12	2	11	0	0	28
Borders	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	1	1	5	1	0	0	8
Fife	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Forth Valley	0	0	0	4	8	4	0	0	16
Grampian	0	0	8	6	7	4	0	0	25
Greater Glasgow	0	0	1	24	43	26	0	3	97
Highland	0	0	0	3	1	4	0	0	8
Lanarkshire	0	0	0	4	12	6	0	0	22
Lothian	0	1	7	21	18	17	0	0	64
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tayside	0	1	4	2	17	1	0	0	25
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Percentage of total number of pharmacy technicians

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant
Scotland	0·0	0·6	7·6	27·1	39·5	24·2	0·0	1·0
CSA	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Argyll and Clyde	0·0	0·0	0·0	28·6	64·3	7·1	0·0	0·0
Ayrshire and Arran	0·0	0·0	10·7	42·9	7·1	39·3	0·0	0·0
Borders	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	66·7	33·3	0·0	0·0
Dumfries and Galloway	0·0	0·0	12·5	12·5	62·5	12·5	0·0	0·0
Fife	0·0	0·0	0·0	100·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Forth Valley	0·0	0·0	0·0	25·0	50·0	25·0	0·0	0·0
Grampian	0·0	0·0	32·0	24·0	28·0	16·0	0·0	0·0
Greater Glasgow	0·0	0·0	1·0	24·7	44·3	26·8	0·0	3·1
Highland	0·0	0·0	0·0	37·5	12·5	50·0	0·0	0·0
Lanarkshire	0·0	0·0	0·0	18·2	54·5	27·3	0·0	0·0

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant
Lothian	0·0	1·6	10·9	32·8	28·1	26·6	0·0	0·0
Orkney	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Shetland	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Tayside	0·0	4·0	16·0	8·0	68·0	4·0	0·0	0·0
Western Isles	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

Number of medical photographers

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant	Total
Scotland	0	0	12	23	13	3	0	0	51
CSA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Argyll and Clyde	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ayrshire and Arran	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Forth Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grampian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greater Glasgow	0	0	5	11	11	1	0	0	28
Highland	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Lanarkshire	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	5
Lothian	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tayside	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Percentage of total number of medical photographers

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior assistant	Assistant
Scotland	0·0	0·0	23·5	45·1	25·5	5·9	0·0	0·0
CSA	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Argyll and Clyde	0·0	0·0	0·0	100·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Ayrshire and Arran	0·0	0·0	50·0	50·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Borders	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Dumfries and Galloway	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Fife	0·0	0·0	25·0	75·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Forth Valley	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Grampian	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Greater Glasgow	0·0	0·0	17·9	39·3	39·3	3·6	0·0	0·0
Highland	0·0	0·0	33·3	33·3	33·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Lanarkshire	0·0	0·0	0·0	40·0	20·0	40·0	0·0	0·0
Lothian	0·0	0·0	60·0	40·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Orkney	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Shetland	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Tayside	0·0	0·0	50·0	50·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Western Isles	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

Health Boards (Regrading)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the time between an appeal against the physiological measurement technicians, cardiology, regrading and the hearing of that appeal;

(2) how many physiological measurement technicians, cardiology, have appealed against their regrading in *(a)* Greater Glasgow health board and *(b)* all other health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on appeals lodged with health boards against their implementation of a new pay and grading structure for various groups of technicians and the length of time it has taken to process them is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest number of expressions of interest about hospital trust status received by his Department; and if he will name the hospitals concerned.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been seven expressions of interest arising from which South Ayrshire and the Royal Scottish National hospitals have submitted applications and an application from Foresterhill (Aberdeen) is expected shortly. The Victoria infirmary (Glasgow), West Grampian unit and Princess Margaret Rose hospital (Edinburgh) are continuing exploratory work, but I have indicated to those promoting the Forfar proposal that it would not be appropriate for trust status in its original form.

Health Consultation Document

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to publish a green paper in line with "The Health of the Nation", as released for consultation by the Secretary of State for Health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have already published on 25 March, after an extensive period of consultation, "Health Education in Scotland: A National Policy Statement", copies of which were placed in the Library. The statement identifies our priorities and sets challenging targets for improvements in health in Scotland. It describes the role of the health education board for Scotland, which was established on 1 April 1991 to lead the health education effort in Scotland, and sets the framework within which the board, health boards, local authorities, voluntary organisations, employers, the media and individuals can work together to secure the health improvements we seek. I expect to take further initiatives which will be announced in due course.

Church of Scotland (Expenditure)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate to which vote in the estimates expenditure incurred by or on behalf of the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is attributed; and if he will list the amounts provided for the current year and in each of the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The expenditure for 1991-92 is held on class XV vote 13, law, order and miscellaneous health services, Scotland. The amounts provided were:

	£
1988-89	[1]58,000
1989-90	[1]73,000
1990-91	[1]71,000
1991-92	76,000

[1]Outturn.

Lanarkshire Working Group

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he has received the report of the Lanarkshire working group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I welcome the report of the Lanarkshire working group, which was published today and I commend the way in which the organisations represented on the group have worked together to propose Lanarkshire-wide solutions to the economic problems caused by major steel and related job losses.

The group's report makes it clear that Lanarkshire has many advantages and assets. Building on the Lanarkshire development agency's business plan, and the ideas and plans of the other private and public bodies in the area, the group has offered proposals which would greatly benefit Lanarkshire's economy. These embrace good sites, good communications and infrastructure, improved training and business support, a better environment, and attractive tourism and leisure facilities. All of these together will support the new and replacement jobs Lanarkshire needs. Given the spirit of co-operation evident in the group itself, I expect the local authorities, Scottish Enterprise, the Lanarkshire development agency, East Kilbridge development corporation, Scottish Homes, the local enterprise trusts and British Steel (Industry) Limited, together with officials of the Scottish Office and the Employment Service, to maintain that partnership and work to ensure that in their programmes and activities, projects identified by the working group are given priority and driven forward to successful completion. The financial assistance now being made available by the Government totals £120 million.

The group has identified a number of early action and medium-term projects, achievement of which will require the sustained co-operation of the various local and national bodies involved, as well as the full co-operation of the private sector. It will be for the Lanarkshire development agency to co-ordinate implementation of the 16 early action projects for site development identified in the report. The agency is, I know, keen to get on with the job.

The group laid particular stress on the need for improvements to the road infrastructure of Lanarkshire and, in particular, the need for early upgrading of the A8 between Newhouse and Baillieston to give better access to industrial sites in the Lanarkshire area and to accommodate increased traffic flows. I recognise the need for such improvements and I have, therefore, commissioned Strathclyde regional council to undertake a design study for a revised road scheme for the upgrading of the A8 between Newhouse and Baillieston which would also allow for early upgrading of the existing Shawhead and Chapelhall junctions to facilitate access from local industrial sites in line with the group's recommendations.

The group also noted the economic benefits which construction of a new general hospital would bring to the Motherwell area. I am therefore very pleased to announce that I have today endorsed Lanarkshire health board's proposal in its acute services strategy to build a new district general hospital at Netherton in Wishaw. This decision will enable detailed planning work to go ahead with a view to a start on site well within the period of four to seven years envisaged by the group. Apart from its welcome contribution to improved health care, this project will contribute construction and long-term jobs, and should help attract business, to the area. A fuller announcement will be made in due course about other aspects of the board's strategy.

Throughout the group's report, stress is laid on the need to stimulate private sector investment in Lanarkshire. I strongly support this approach. Now that we have a report which highlights Lanarkshire's assets and its many and varied prospects for development, I shall be looking to the private sector to take up the opportunities available, and to build on the foundations of increased public sector investment.

I look in particular to the positive role which British Steel can play, recognising British Steel (Industry) Ltd.'s important existing contribution to the area, and welcoming its recent initiative in opening a new office in Wishaw. I am also especially pleased to welcome today's announcement by British Steel (Industry) Ltd. that it intends to spend an additional £10 million in Lanarkshire over the next three years on measures to which the Lanarkshire working group also attached priority—particularly the provision of finance for business projects,

and additional managed work space. This will integrate well with the proposals in the working group's report, and make a valuable contribution towards their fulfilment.

The report recommends that selected strategic and industrial development sites in north Lanarkshire should be given enterprise zone status, recognising that for an enterprise zone to be designated within an area, it has to satisfy the criteria established by the European Commission. The Government are considering this recommendation against the background of its existing policy on enterprise zones, and the costs which might be involved.

Taken together, the recommendations of the group would represent a substantial call on public expenditure. The bulk of the expenditure needed to implement the proposals on site and business development, training, and environmental improvement would be the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and the Lanarkshire development agency. Strathclyde regional council and the five Lanarkshire district councils would be responsible for meeting necessary expenditure on local roads, water, sewerage and factory building identified in the report.

I have already made available for the Lanarkshire development agency and the Lanarkshire district councils nearly £28 million of additional funding for expenditure in the course of 1991-92. These resources, which include the £15 million announced in May by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, are over and above Scottish Enterprise's basic allocation to the Lanarkshire development agency of £36 million, the £5 million spent by the Scottish Development Agency in buying key north Lanarkshire sites earlier this year, and the £26 million capital programme for East Kilbride development corporation, and will enable a substantial early start to be made on the site developments and environmental and other improvements recommended by the group.

Through the Department of Trade and Industry the Government will make available some £28 million to assist British Steel employees made redundant who qualify under the iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme.

I am also pleased to announce today that the Scottish Office has approved a project proposed by Strathclyde regional council for funding under the urban programme to help redundant steelworkers. The project would be based in Motherwell, and concentrate on the deprived communities in north Lanarkshire.

On European Community assistance, I agree that Lanarkshire's needs should be urgently considered for enhanced support under the Strathclyde integrated development operation. I shall ensure that the other recommendations concerning European Community assistance are drawn to the attention of the European Commission.

The Government will announce their expenditure plans for the years 1992-93 onwards at the end of the public expenditure survey. I shall give the needs of Lanarkshire priority in deciding the allocations to my programmes. I shall also expect the other public bodies represented in the group to give similar priority to projects for which they are responsible. It will be important that the projects which proceed in the short term are those which provide the maximum economic benefits for Lanarkshire, thus ensuring the best use of the resources available.

In Lanarkshire, the Government have identified the problem, established the working group to address it and is now bringing together the measures and resources to respond to it so that, over the next few years, Lanarkshire's economy will have the chance to diversify and regenerate for the benefit of its people and of Scotland as a whole.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Diversification

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives to farmers about diversification in the countryside if they wish to develop motor-cross training areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Under the Agriculture Act 1986 there is no charge for general advice to farmers on diversifying their businesses into non-agricultural activities. Such advice is given within the context of the farm's resources, its location and the objectives of the farmer. Activities such as the provision of motor-cross training facilities normally require planning permission and as such, farmers will be advised to consult their local authority, whose responsibility it then is to approve or reject such projects.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial aid is available in the United Kingdom for the breeding and rearing of greyhounds as part of the diversification of agriculture; and whether he has made any such payments.

Mr. Gummer: No such aid is available in the United Kingdom. No such payments have therefore been made.

43 International Whaling Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the members of the United Kingdom delegation from the non-governmental organisations who were represented at the 43 International Whaling Commission meeting at Reykjavik; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom delegation included two representatives from Wildlife Link, the liaison body for major voluntary organisations in the United Kingdom concerned with wildlife.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has completed his review of environmentally sensitive areas policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My review of the ESA policy has been based primarily on an evaluation of the schemes that have been in operation since 1987 in the Broads, Pennine dales, south downs, Somerset levels and moors and west Penrith. I have also received views from a wide range of interests. The achievements of these schemes have been carefully monitored and have proved their value in conserving the special habitats, landscapes and items of historical or archaeological interest in these areas. I have, therefore, concluded that they should continue with the aim of securing further environmental protection and enhancement.

I intend to publish reports on the monitoring together with proposals for these ESAs as a basis for consultation, and to bring revised schemes before Parliament later this year. Agreements with farmers in the remaining ESA schemes in England that were introduced in 1988 begin to expire in 1993 and I will be reviewing those schemes next year.

My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales have reached similar conclusions concerning the ESAs designated in 1987 in Scotland and Wales. They will also be making proposals for consultation.

Phosphate Waste

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what informaton he has on phosphate waste being discharged into British coastal waters and its effect on marine life.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 7 May 1991, *Official Report*, column *398*.

ENERGY

Sellafield (Illegal Entry)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will call for a report from the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc on the circumstances of the illegal entry of two persons into secure areas of the Sellafield plant during the week beginning 20 May;

(2) if he will make a statement on the security and health and safety implications for the people of Workington of the break-in to secure areas of the Sellafield site in the week beginning 20 May;

(3) if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary on the circumstances of the break-in at the Sellafield site during the week beginning 20 May, and on the security implications of these events.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: British Nuclear Fuels plc has kept my officials fully informed of this incident. I understand that in the late evening of Thursday 23 May two demonstrators were detected and apprehended within the Sellafield perimeter fence. BNFL and the UKAEA constabulary are satisfied that no access was gained to sensitive buildings.

All civil nuclear sites employ defence in depth, these include successive layers of protection around sensitive operations and materials. I understand that in this case, only the outermost layers were involved. Security of the installation was, therefore, maintained and there were no health and safety implications for the demonstrators, the Sellafield workers on site or the public.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 10th June 1991

ENVIRONMENT

Public Inquiries

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the criteria for appointing public inquiry inspectors; and on what basis public inquiry inspectors can be sacked.

Mr. Yeo: Before appointing an inspector to hold a public inquiry, the Department considers what issues the case is likely to raise and then selects an inspector with the appropriate expertise and experience.

Salaried inspectors are subject to the same disciplinary code as any other civil servant. Fee paid inspectors are subject to the rules set out in their contracts or terms of engagement. Public inquiries concerned with trunk road orders are conducted by independent individuals, not civil servants, and they are nominated specifically for each inquiry by the Lord Chancellor.

Population Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a table showing nationally, regionally and for each district, the total number of households, the number drawing household benefit, the number paying a reduced community charge by bands of reduced charge, and the number on national assistance.

Mr. Key: Information on households at district level is contained in table 39 of the county report to the 1981 census, copies of which are in the Library. Similar analyses from the 1991 census will become available during 1992. Current estimates of the number of households for England and the English regions were given in the reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on 20 May 1991 at columns *327-28*.

Estimates of the number of households in receipt of housing benefit are:

Estimated number of households claiming housing benefit

Standard region	*Thousands*
Northern	295·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	381·5
East Anglia	239·9
East Midlands	110·8
Greater London	533·6
South-East (ex. London)	499·3
South-West	252·2
West Midlands	366·3
North-West	508·2
England Total	3,186·9

The information relates to November 1990 and is based on quarterly caseloads. A table containing this information for districts, where available, has been placed in the Library.

It is not possible to provide the information requested on the numbers who will be paying a reduced community charge at either regional or district level. For estimates at a national level I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 17 April 1991 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) at columns *184-85*.

National assistance was replaced by supplementary benefit in 1966 which was itself replaced by income support in 1988. Information on income support is only available for the former social security regions. Quarterly details as at February 1991 are as follows:

Social Security Region	*Unemployed (000s)*	*Pensioners (000s)*	*Others (000s)*	*Total (000s)*
North-East	257	242	232	731
Midlands	250	258	235	743
London, North	249	251	268	768
London, South	221	228	219	667
Wales and South West	199	215	183	597
North-West	241	224	237	702
Scotland	180	151	176	507
National Total	1,597	1,568	1,550	4,715

Urban Development Corporations

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government will be allocating funds over and above those already earmarked for the urban development corporations or promised in grant aid to fund the full cost of completion of projects left unfinished on the termination of the urban development corporations' fixed lifetime.

Mr. Key: I expect satisfactory arrangements to be made to deal with projects which are under way when a corporation is wound up. These arrangements will be determined by the circumstances of the particular case.

Homelessness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he gives to local authorities on the definition of intentionally homeless.

Mr. Yeo: Section 71 of the Housing Act 1985 provides for the Secretary of State to issue guidance to local authorities on how to apply the homelessness legislation. Local authorities must have regard to this guidance when dealing with homeless applicants. A revised code of guidance—third edition—is currently in preparation, following extensive consultation, and will be issued shortly. The code contains advice on how local authorities should assess whether an applicant has become homeless

intentionally, although this decision will be a matter for the authority's own discretion on the facts of each individual case.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing legislation to place a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation for all 16 to 18-year-olds who are homeless.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's 1989 homelessness review concluded that the homelessness legislation provided an adequate safety net to those in greatest need who were homeless through no fault of their own. The homelessness code of guidance contains advice on how local authorities should assess applications from young people who apply as homeless, although this will be a matter for the local authority's discretion on the facts of each individual case.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities in England and Wales which provide rented accommodation for single, homeless people.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities that retain housing for rent provide accommodation for homeless households when the need arises. However the information available to my Department does not separately identify accommodation let to single people.

For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Transmitter, Northumberland

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to call in the proposals for the erection of a Loran C transmitter near Amble, Northumberland by Trinity House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend cannot call in a development proposal before a planning application has been submitted. I understand that Trinity House is consulting Alnwick district council and other interested parties with a view to exercising permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 to establish a transmitter at Togston to service the proposed north-west European Loran C system. Exercise of these rights is dependent upon the conclusion of an international agreement on the UK joining the system.

Housing Starts

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his Department's working forecasts for the number of *(a)* local authority new starts and *(b)* housing association new starts for each of the next five years.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the Department's annual report—(Cm 1508)—chapter 7, paragraphs 7.30 to 7.47 in particular.

Institute of Horticulture

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received from the Institute of Horticulture regarding garden festivals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he next proposes to discuss the development of garden festivals with the Institute of Horticulture; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he next proposes to meet the Institute of Horticulture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have agreed to meet the Institute of Horticulture to discuss the future of garden festivals, following a recent letter from the president arguing that further festivals be staged.

Industrial Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken to promote the implementation of policies to ensure that safe and effective arrangements are made for the disposal of industrial waste in the country of origin; what steps he has taken to encourage the adoption of this policy by other countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom has taken a leading part in persuading the international community to accept the principle that industrial and other wastes should be disposed of at environmentally sound facilities in the country of production. The OECD decision-recommendation on the reduction of transfrontier movements of wastes of 31 January 1991 requires member countries to dispose of their wastes in an environmentally satisfactory fashion as far as possible in their own territory. EC directive 91/156 of 18 March 1991 requires member states to dispose of waste to a high level of environmental protection and to establish an adequate network of disposal facilities to enable the Community as a whole to become self-sufficient in waste disposal and member states to move towards that aim individually. The United Kingdom has been advocating the importance of self-sufficiency during the current negotiations on the draft regulation on shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community which would enable member states to ratify the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes.

Angling

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government intend to introduce legislation to impose the same or similar restrictions on the use of lead shot as imposed on the use of lead weights in angling.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are aware of the potential effects of lead shot on the environment. We have asked the Nature Conservancy Council for England to assess the extent of any danger to wildlife and its habitat, and to monitor the outcome of current research into possible alternatives to lead shot. When we have evaluated all this evidence, we will be able to decide whether voluntary restriction or legislation is more appropriate.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the enterprise zone designated areas by standard region in England, giving the date of designation and expiry.

Mr. Portillo: The table supplies this information.

Region	Enterprise Zone	Designation Date
Northern	Tyneside	25 August 1981
	Hartlepool	23 October 1981
	Middlesbrough	8 November 1983
	Sunderland	27 April 1990
Yorkshire and Humberside	Wakefield	31 July 1981 and 23 September 1983
	Rotherham	16 August 1983
	Scunthorpe	23 September 1983
	Glandford	14 April 1985
North West	Salford/Trafford	12 August 1981
	Speke (Liverpool)	25 August 1981
	Workington	4 October 1983
	N. E. Lancashire	7 December 1983
West Midlands	Dudley	10 July 1981 and 3 October 1994
	Telford	13 January 1994
East Midlands	Corby	22 June 1981
	Wellingborough	26 July 1983
South East	North West Kent	31 October 1983 and 10 October 1986
London	Isle of Dogs	26 April 1982

Note: Each zone has a 10 year life designation; Wakefield, Dudley and North West Kent include zone extensions.

National Parks

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the percentages of planning decisions made in eight weeks by each of the district councils in Staffordshire and in the Peak District national park in the 12 most recent three-month periods for which figures are available.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of planning decisions made within 8 weeks in Staffordshire, by planning authority

Per cent.

Local authority	Quarter of decision 1988 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Cannock Chase	74	83	82	80
East Staffordshire	87	90	82	74
Lichfield	53	73	66	59
Newcastle Under Lyme	90	91	93	85
South Staffordshire	60	54	48	35
Stafford	81	85	78	39
Staffordshire Moorlands	62	63	55	48
Stoke on Trent	66	73	70	69
Tamworth	81	78	77	69
Peak National Park[1]	68	55	49	49

[1] This includes figures for areas outside Staffordshire.

Percentage of planning decisions made within 8 weeks in Staffordshire, by planning authority

Per cent.

Local authority	Quarter of decision 1989 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Cannock Chase	75	80	60	72
East Staffordshire	70	75	68	70
Lichfield	57	63	57	59
Newcastle Under Lyme	90	86	75	83
South Staffordshire	40	41	37	51
Stafford	22	52	71	52
Staffordshire Moorlands	40	29	10	32
Stoke on Trent	63	63	22	47
Tamworth	68	56	68	67
Peak National Park[1]	51	54	38	42

[1] This includes figures for areas outside Staffordshire.

Percentage of planning decisions made within eight weeks in Staffordshire, by planning authority

Per cent.

Local authority	Quarter of decision 1990 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Cannock Chase	66	65	71	71
East Staffordshire	68	59	62	76
Lichfield	57	59	61	59
Newcastle Under Lyme	85	87	83	85
South Staffordshire	49	70	62	64
Stafford	23	19	31	22
Staffordshire Moorlands	27	35	38	39
Stoke on Trent	40	56	48	47
Tamworth	68	66	73	61
Peak National Park[1]	28	20	28	35

[1] This includes figures for areas outside Staffordshire.

Cheshire County Council

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will ask the Audit Commission to investigate the decision by Cheshire county council to replace existing road signs marking the county boundary;

(2) if he will ask the Audit Commission to investigate the decision by Cheshire county council to allocate £60,000 to a public relations campaign to promote its image as the local authority.

Mr. Key: No. These are matters for the auditor who must undertake his duties in accordance with the Audit Commission's code of audit practice. The code requires the auditor to satisfy himself that the body whose accounts are being audited has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the residents of Cheshire about the expenditure by Cheshire county council on public relations campaigns.

Mr. Key: We have received no recent representations from residents of Cheshire concerning expenditure by Cheshire county council on public relations campaigns.

Cheshire Road Signs

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will intervene to prevent Cheshire county council from replacing all existing road signs indicating the county boundary in the light of the review of local government structure;

(2) if he will meet the chief executive of Cheshire county council to discuss the decision of the county council to replace the existing road signs marking the county boundary.

Mr. Key: Local spending decisions are a matter to be determined by Cheshire county council in the light of its knowledge of local circumstances and the relevant powers. Subject to audit, the council will in this, as in all matters, be accountable to Cheshire electors for its decisions.

Local Government Review

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to local authorities on public relations campaigns in the run-up to the review of local government structure.

Mr. Key: The joint circular of 15 August 1988 from the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Development Department and the Welsh Office contains the code of recommended practice of local authority publicity to which, by statute, local authorities must have regard.

Special Grants Scheme

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations that received grants from the Department of the Environment's special grants scheme; and at what level the grants were made for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Key: In 1989-90 a total of £1·942 million was expended from my Department's special grants programme to support 85 projects in England, which increased in 1990-91 to £2·235 million to 94 projects. I am placing a list of organisations receiving grant for both years in the Library of the House. Separate programmes are administered in Scotland and Wales by the Scottish Office Environment Department and the Welsh Office respectively.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the locations of any high-volume waste incinerators which have received planning permission in the United Kingdom over the last two years; and what conditions were imposed, if any, in each case.

Mr. Baldry: Whether to grant planning permission for a high volume waste incinerator is a function of local planning authorities. We do not collect records of permissions for such developments, or of conditions attached to such permissions.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list current United Kingdom regulations in force or pending which restrict or control the erection of high-volume waste incinerators in the vicinity of food storage and processing premises.

Mr. Baldry: The erection of a high-volume waste incinerator would require planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Acts. Before they can operate, new incinerators must also be authorised under part I of the Environmental Protection Act either by the local authority or Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, depending on the volume of the incinerator.

Water Tower, Southwold

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for the listing of the water tower at Southwold in Suffolk.

Sir George Young: The old water tower was listed on 16 May on the basis of clear advice from English Heritage, the Secretary of State's statutory professional advisers, that it is a building of special architectural or historic interest. English Heritage advised that the tower, which was built in 1886, is a very rare example of a wind-powered water tower.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the procedures that were followed in the listing of the old water tower at Southwold in Suffolk; and if he will give the names of the inspector and of those who were consulted.

Sir George Young: This building was drawn to the Department's attention in April and, in accordance with the provisions of section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, English Heritage's advice was sought on whether it was a building of special architectural or historic interest. No other body was consulted in this particular case. The inspector who assessed the building was an historic buildings inspector from English Heritage, but the final decision was taken by the Secretary of State. It is not our normal practice to consult more widely on proposals for listing, or to give the names of the inspectors who advise the Secretary of State.

Heveningham Hall

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the covenants accepted by ID Investment Development AG, and the deed of covenant by Mr. Al Ghazzi, guaranteeing the company's performance in relation to Heveningham hall.

Sir George Young: The broad effect of the covenants which were entered into at the time of the sale has been explained on more than one occasion. I do not think that there is anything in the present situation which would justify breaching normal considerations of confidentiality as to the detailed terms of the conveyance.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column *163*, who is re-examining Dame Sylvia Crowe's scheme and in the light of what specific research.

Sir George Young: The re-examination is being carried out by the bodies mentioned in my previous answer in the context of their formulation of a replanting programme; English Heritage is also being consulted. I was referring to general advances in our understanding of historic landscapes over recent years rather than to specific research.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring he has undertaken of *(a)* 18th century restoration and *(b)* 20th century restoration of Heveningham hall.

Sir George Young: Monitoring of works carried out under listed building consent is in the first instance a matter for the local planning authority. In view of the importance of the building, English Heritage has also kept closely in touch with the progress of the repair and restoration work.

Council House Sales

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to amend part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act to release capital receipts from the sale of council houses to be invested in the provision of new housing.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities are required to set aside part of their capital receipts that have accrued from the sale of assets to meet outstanding loan debt and other liabilities. The remainder they may spend in new capital investment. The balance between debt redemption and new investment is kept under review.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to place a duty on local authorities to help provide for another neighbouring local authority with greater housing needs.

Mr. Yeo: No.

Council Housing, London

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of council housing in London is currently not inhabited by council tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 May 1991]:* From latest available information reported on HIP1 returns it is estimated that 2·9 per cent. of stock owned by London boroughs was vacant at 1 April 1990. A further 0·7 per cent. was recorded as in unlicensed occupation.

The Government have taken steps to ensure that local authorities improve the utilisation and management of their stock. There is certainly considerable scope for improvement on the above figures, particularly among inner London boroughs. Revised housing revenue account subsidy arrangements now incorporate financial incentives for authorities to minimise the proportion of voids in their stock. The publication of performance indicators from this year onwards will highlight standards of housing management, including control of stock, and increase accountability to tenants. London boroughs have received additional allocations of £86 million over the past two years to repair empty local authority homes through the homelessness initiative. It is estimated that more than 5,000 will be brought back into use as a result.

Local Authority Service Provision

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what areas of local authority service provision for which he is responsible payments are required to be made to individuals who are not employees *(a)* in the form of a grant or one-off payment and *(b)* on receipt of paid invoices.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* I will write to my hon. Friend.

Holmewood Estate (Finance)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the funding sources and amounts already allocated for improvements to Holmewood estate in Bradford.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 June 1991]:* The Department has to date made the following allocations for improvements to the Holmewood estate:

	£
Estate Action Programme	4,958,600
Urban Programme	202,000
City Action Team Special Funding	68,670

Kew Gardens

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total daily admission cost for an unemployed man, his partner and two children over the age of five years to enter Kew gardens for each year since 1985; what account has been taken of the level of unemployment benefit in setting those charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

The standard daily admission costs for two adults and two children over five years of age entering Kew gardens for each year since 1985 have been, and are, as follows:

	Admission £
1985	0·50
1986	0·50
1987	1·00
1988	1·00
1989	3·00
January-October 1990	3·00
November-December 1990	8·00
1991	8·00

The current standard single adult entry charge is £3, but senior citizens and students can enter at half price and children under 15 for £1. No special provision has been made for visitors who are unemployed.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has issued any guidelines during the past 12 months to the mobility allowance units with regard to the length of time for which mobility allowance is awarded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: An award of mobility allowance is made by the independent adjudicating authorities for as long a period as it is considered that the conditions of entitlement will be met. I understand that no guidance on this point, other than that issued in connection with the changes relating to people without legs, has been issued to staff during the past 12 months.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will arrange to provide a simple medical report form for applicants for mobility allowance who are suffering from sickle cell disease in a similar style to form MY38A used for applicants who suffer from haemophilia.

Mr. Scott: Arrangements to introduce a special medical report form for people with sickle cell disease claiming mobility allowance are already in hand. Benefits Agency staff are liaising with the Birmingham sickle cell and thalassaemia centre about the questions to be included on the form and as soon as the text has been agreed, the form will be printed and brought into use.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the present criteria for deciding whether his Department will collect maintenance payments on behalf of income support claimants; and in what proportion of cases these arrangements currently operate.

Mr. Jack: The Department will collect maintenance payments on behalf of a claimant to income support if the liable relative does not pay the full maintenance due, pays late or misses a payment. Payments can also be collected by the Department where there are other good grounds for doing so—for instance, if there is a threat of violence from the liable relative.

The latest information held is for May 1989[1], and shows that at that time just under a quarter of maintenance payments for income support claimants were collected on their behalf by the Department.

[1] *Source:* Annual Statistical Enquiry, May 1989.

Vaccine Damage Payments Act

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures of applications made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979; and how many cases have been successful or are still under consideration.

Mr. Scott: Between 1979 and 31 May 1991, 3,447 applications for vaccine damage payments were received. Of these, 848 awards were made, 72 are still under consideration and 44 have been referred at the claimant's request to the independent vaccine damage payments tribunal.

Pensions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated net cost or gain to the Exchequer in the current financial year of the final or incremental 34p by which retirement pension exceeds the single person's income support level inclusive of the £13·75 pensioner premium.

Miss Widdecombe: There is no net gain or loss to the Exchequer. A single pensioner on income support, inclusive of the £13·75 pensioner premium, receives £1·40 more than the full basic level retirement pension.

Belfast Office

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many telephone and fax lines are available at the Belfast office of his Department dealing with benefit claims from applicants in London;

(2) what is the average time taken before claimants receive substantive replies to queries from his Department's office in Belfast sent in by *(a)* fax and *(b)* telephone;

(3) what is the cost of the system of phone referrals of local calls from London to his Department's office in Belfast for the year 1990-91.

Miss Widdecombe: The relocation of benefits work to the social security centre in Belfast is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Euro-card

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest position on a European card for pensioners.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) on 25 March at column *290*. I will send him a copy of the letter I wrote to Members of the European Parliament on 28 February.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people registered disabled receive attendance allowance in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Renfrew district.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are being taken to harmonise the regulations governing prescribed industrial diseases within the European Community.

Mr. Scott: The Government are currently considering the European Commission recommendation of 22 May 1990 concerning the adoption of a European schedule of occupational diseases.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has received from his Department's monitoring exercise of claimants who do not qualify for invalid care allowance in specific weeks because their children return home from residential care on alternate weekends; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Scott: In the 12 months to May 1990, out of a total of about 35,800 invalid care allowance decisions, 120 claims were disallowed solely on grounds of the effects of intermittent care. There are no plans to change the present rules.

Farmers (Family Credit)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what total amount of family credit was paid to farmers in England and Wales during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: Separate information about farmers is not available. We estimate that in 1989-90 the total amount of family credit paid to families in England and Wales where the main earner was in "farming, fisheries and related occupations" was around £12 million, out of total expenditure on family credit in Great Britain for that year of £425 million.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of farmers currently claiming family credit in England and Wales; and what were the equivalent numbers for *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1984.

Mr. Jack: Separate information about farmers is not available. As at 31 October 1990, the latest date for which comprehensive information is available, there were 8,980 families in England and Wales receiving family credit where the main earner was in "farming, fisheries and related occupation". Equivalent information is not available for 1984 and 1979, since the occupational classifications used for family income supplement statistics were on a different basis.

Family Credit

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the number of self-employed currently applying for family credit and the total amount paid to the self-employed in family credit during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: As at 31 October 1990, the latest date for which comprehensive information is available, there were 47,860 families receiving family credit where the main earner was self-employed. We estimate that, in 1989-90, the total amount of family credit paid to families where the main earner was self-employed was around £88 million, which was just over 20 per cent. of total expenditure on family credit in that year.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of families who received family credit payments in each of the last two years.

Mr. Jack: 597,000 awards of family credit were made in 1989-90 and 638,500 in 1990-91. The total of awards made since the start of the scheme in 1988 recently passed the 2 million mark. Awards last for six months, and then a renewal claim has to be made, leading to a further award if appropriate. Therefore, many families will have received more than one award, and information is not available as to the total number of families who have received family credit during a given period.

Common Retirement Age

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate the additional costs of providing for all men and women to claim a full state pension at a common retirement age of 60, 62 and 64 years of age, respectively, at the current level of state pension paid in 1991-92;

(2) if he will estimate the common retirement age for men and women for state pension purposes which would be cost neutral at 1991-92 levels of pension;

(3) if he will make a statement of Her Majesty's Government's current policy on a common retirement age for state pension purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on 20 May 1991 at col *627* and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 27 February 1991 at col *539*.

Price Indexation

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer of 3 June, when he expects a decision will be made on the introduction of the limited price indexation under the terms of the Social Security Act 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: No date has yet been set.

Income Support

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend social security arrangements to allow for income support to be paid in advance to the individual and to make it easier for social fund loans and grants to be paid in advance to the landlord.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to amend the payment of income support in arrears to claimants under pension age. Those over pension age are paid income support in advance. We consider that these arrangements are sensible because they are in line with the way wages and other benefits are paid. Anyone who is unable to manage until their first payday may apply for a crisis loan from the social fund.

Loans are available from the social fund to pay for rent in advance. Whether such payments are made direct to the landlord is at the discretion of the local office.

TRANSPORT

Airport Security

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken to apply the findings on airport security of the sheriff principal in the Lockerbie fatal accident inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The sheriff principal's report is being studied most carefully by the Department. Only one of the 20 findings referred directly to the Department.

The Department has required the industry to apply additional security controls to all unaccompanied bags. It is also discussing with representatives of airlines new procedures to ensure that all bags to be flown are properly authorised.

Technology for carrying out reconciliation checks on large volumes of baggage is becoming available and is being introduced by airlines. It is not yet sufficiently widespread or co-ordinated to enable the Department to impose a general requirement for its use by all airlines. We are pursuing this with the industry and international bodies. In practice, at airports in the United Kingdom, British Airways and other major airlines substantially meet the requirements indentified by the sheriff principal.

Midland Line (Electrification)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is prepared to authorise the expansion of British Rail's borrowing approvals to commence the immediate electrification of the Midland main line from Bedford to Sheffield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to put forward electrification proposals. I have not received from it any proposals in respect of the midland main line. I understand that InterCity's first investment priority is the west coast main line, where the rolling stock and infrastructure is considerably older and the service less reliable than on the midland main line.

M25 (Tunnels)

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of sections of the M25 that are underground in tunnels; what is the distance of the largest single section of the M25 in a tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: There are tunnels on the M25 at Bell Common and Holmesdale, the latter tunnel being the longer at 650 m. The London orbital is completed to the east of London by the A282 Dartford tunnels under the Thames which are some 1,400 m long.

Aviation (Third Party Liability)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to introduce compulsory insurance against third party liability for general aviation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the advice he has received from the former chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority on the question of compulsory insurance for aircraft registered in the United Kingdom. The Civil Aviation Authority advice identified a number of issues which would need to be resolved, including how a compulsory scheme could be enforced and how much it would cost, what the implications for the insurance industry would be, various questions on liability, and whether the scope of a scheme should be such as to insure against liability to passengers in aircraft or only to persons on the ground.

Railway Reopenings (Tribunal) Bill

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be in a position to answer the letter from the hon. Member for Christchurch regarding his Department's attitude towards the Railway Reopenings (Tribunal) Bill; and if he will publish his reply by means of an answer to this question.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has today written to my hon. Friend.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total amount spent by the Land Registry in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by the Land Registry in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

The Attorney-General: Management and computer consultancy contracts were awarded by the Land Registry in 1990-91 as follows:

Management consultancy

Price Waterhouse—Review of the Agency's top management structure.

Computer consultancy

Intergraph UK Ltd.—Technical advice on digital mapping.

Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency—Departmental Consultancy Support Agreement providing ongoing technical advice, support and Information Technology procurement services.

The Land Registry's expenditure on these services in 1990-91 was £48,061·79.

Bailiffs' Letters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General how many complaints he has received about intimidatory bailiffs' letters; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have not received any complaints about intimidatory bailiffs' letters. The Lord Chancellor has received some complaints about private bailiffs employed by local authorities to enforce liability orders for unpaid community charge.

The complaints concerned the intimidatory behaviour of some bailiffs and the lack of information about complaints procedures. These complaints were referred to the appropriate local authority.

Procedures for the execution of warrants by county court bailiffs are standardised. Any forms or notices which

bailiffs need to send are produced centrally and are pre-printed. Care is taken to ensure that the wording of these is clear, precise and not intimidatory.

Forfeiture of Leases

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will ask the Law Commission to look at the consequences of the Court of Appeal decision in the case of Billson *v.* Residential Appartments Ltd. in relation to claims for relief from forfeiture of leases.

The Attorney-General: The Law Commission is presently engaged in the preparation of a draft Bill to give effect to the recommendations for landlords' termination orders made in its report of 1985 (Law Com. No. 142 —H.C. 279) on the forfeiture of tenancies. I understand that the difficulties dealt with by the decision to which the hon. Gentleman refers were addressed by the recommendations, which the commission is now putting into draft legislative form.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how much in costs was ordered to be paid against the Crown Prosecution Service in respect of charges against Reg Brealey and others on a charge of insider dealing; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The order made by His Honour Judge Sanders was that the Crown prosecution service should pay the whole of the defence costs post-committal in the case to which the hon. Member refers; and that, failing agreement between the parties as to the amount of such costs, they should be at liberty to apply to him for a determination. It is too soon to say whether agreement as to the amount of the costs will be possible. Moreover, the Director of Public Prosecutions has made application to the divisional court for judicial review of the order for costs.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Insurance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average earnings for each year since 1979; and what percentage of that earnings was levied to pay national insurance.

Mr. Maude: Average weekly earnings are measured in April each year by the Department of Employment's new earnings survey. The figures since 1979 are given in column *(a)*. The figures in column *(b)* show the percentage of all estimated income from employment and self employment paid in national insurance contributions. They should be regarded as indicating the trend in this percentage rather than as a meaningful measure of its level because the proportion of earned income which employees or self-employed persons may pay in national insurance contributions will vary according to individual circumstances.

Year	*(a)* £s	*(b)* *percentage*[1]
1979	86·2	8·7
1980	106·3	8·8
1981	119·8	9·3
1982	132·1	9·9
1983	144·5	10·5
1984	155·8	10·6
1985	167·4	10·6
1986	181·2	10·5
1987	194·9	10·5
1988	213·6	10·6
1989	234·3	9·7
1990	258·0	n/a

[1] Figures for 1988 and 1989 are calculated after netting off rebates of contributions and incentive payments made to personal pension schemes. The 1989 figure would otherwise have been 10·5.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amount of revenue was received from national insurance contributions *(a)* from employees and *(b)* employers for each of the years since 1979 at constant prices.

Mr. Maude: The information in real terms using GDP deflator at market prices, is as follows (£ million in 1985 prices).

Year	*National Insurance contributions* *By employees*	*By employers*
1979	11,481	7,580
1980	11,450	7,734
1981	11,045	8,655
1982	10,877	9,892
1983	11,654	11,023
1984	11,912	11,416
1985	12,245	11,683
1986	13,082	11,909
1987	13,678	12,360
1988	14,470	12,932
1989	14,402	11,973

Sickness

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage of days lost due to sickness in the civil service during 1990-91.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Sickness absence information for the civil service is collected on a calendar year basis. The 1990 statistics are not yet available. In 1989 about 4 per cent. of days were lost due to sickness absence in the non-industrial civil service.

Civil Service (Contract Cleaners)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the relevant trade unions to discuss wages and conditions for contract cleaners in the civil service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Contract cleaners are not civil servants. Their pay and conditions of service are for agreement with their particular employers. However, to ensure compliance with the requirements of Government contracts, contractors must ensure that they maintain the level of service specified in the contracts and other rates of pay and conditions of service sufficient to attract suitable staff to achieve these levels. Departments monitor the performance of contractors throughout the duration of contracts.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will arrange for publication, for each Government Department, of the total amount spent in 1990-91 on *(a)* management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases, *(b)* details of each contract awarded in that year, giving the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment and *(c)* the total amount budgeted to spend in 1991-92.

Mr. Mellor: Information on all Departments is not held centrally. For expenditure by Her Majesty's Treasury in the financial year 1990-91, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary on 4 June at column *142*. These figures include the cost of development studies, which in turn include the cost of associated hardware and software; the latter items are not separately identifiable.

The Treasury's budgeted consultancy spend for financial year 1991-92 is £3,568,000.

Commercial Confidentiality

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from European banks on the subject of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Maples: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many female prisoners were mentally ill during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: Statistical records available for the six months 1 April 1990 to 30 September 1990 show that over that period 85 female prisoners were diagnosed as being mentally disordered and removed from prison; 43 of these were reported to be mentally ill.

On 30 September 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, 23 female prisoners were reported by prison medical officers to be mentally disordered as defined by the Mental Health Act 1983. Of these, 10 were reported to be mentally ill.

The Government encourage the diversion of mentally disordered offenders from the prison system whenever custody is not necessary in the public interest.

Human Rights

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision on Michael Thynne's case and the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mrs. Rumbold: When the House considers the House of Lords' amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill, we intend to bring forward proposals for new arrangements for deciding the release of discretionary life sentence prisoners, which will comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the cases of Mr. Thynne and others.

If these amendments are approved by Parliament and Mr. Thynne is still detained when they come into effect, his case will be considered in accordance with them. In the meantime, the case will be dealt with under the existing arrangements for considering the release of life sentence prisoners, and is due to be considered by the local review committee in February 1992.

Refugees

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent meeting he has had with the British Refugee Council concerning displaced Palestinians, Kurds, Shiite Iraqis, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Filipinos and Yemenis following the Gulf war.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Police Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in relation to the envisaged police national network, whether all the major command and control or criminal information systems of each police force are to be linked to the network; whether the network will include the police national computer; whether there are plans for the network to facilitate transfers between police forces and their respective criminal intelligence databases; whether there are plans to utilise more efficiently the name based information from the DVLA in relation to criminal information databases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 15 May 1991 at column *185*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place in the Library the report of the review committee exploring the wider use of police criminal records; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have arranged for a copy of the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the national collection of criminal records to be placed in the Library shortly. The report is now being considered in accordance with the procedures for efficiency scrutinies.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the organisations that have replied to his consultation exercise in relation to the proposal by the European Commission for a data Protection directive.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following organisations have responded to our consultation exercise:

The Advertising Association
American Express
The Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Association of British Insurers
The Association of British Travel Agents
Association of Chief Police Officers
The Association for Information Management (ASLIB)
Association for Payment Clearing Services (APACS)
Barclays Bank plc
The Booksellers Association of Great Britain and Ireland
British Bankers Association
The British Broadcasting Corporation
The British Computer Society

British Dental Association
The British Direct Marketing Association
British List Brokers Association
British Medical Association
British Telecom
CCN Credit Systems
The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA)
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Confederation of British Industry
Confederation of Information Communication Industries
Consumer Credit Trade Association
Consumers Association
Consumers in the European Community Group (UK)
Council of Mortgage Lenders
The Office of Data Protection Registrar
Direct Mail Services Standards Board
European Association of Information Services (EUSIDIC)
Finance Houses Association
Independent Television Association (ITV)
Industry Forum on Data Protection
The Institute of Chartered Accountants
The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland
Institute of Credit Management
The Institute of Information Scientists
The Institute of Internal Auditors—UK
Institute of Personal Management
The International Stock Exchange of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland
The Law Society
The Law Society of Northern Ireland
The Law Society of Scotland
The Library Association
Local Government Training Board
The Mail Order Traders Association
The Market Research Society
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
The National Audit Office
National Book Committee
The National Computing Centre Ltd.
The National Consumer Council
The National Consumer Credit Federation
National Council for Civil Liberties (Liberty)
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
National Westminster Bank plc
The Newspaper Society
Periodical Publishers Association
The Retail Consortium
Securities and Investments Board
Trustee Savings Bank Group plc

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the reasons for the Government's opposition to the European Commission's proposals for a data protection directive in relation to *(a)* the distinction between personal data held in the public and private sector, *(b)* the supervision of the personal data held by security services, *(c)* the seeking of data subject consent and *(d)* the additional individual rights proposed in the directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In large-scale, technically advanced societies both public and private sector organisations need to collect and computerise information about individuals in order effectively to discharge administrative and commercial functions in the public interest. The Government believe that data protection law should recognise this, and guard against damage to individual's interests through misuse of data rather than place unnecessary obstacles in the way of normal use.

The Government therefore see no justification for treating either public or private sector use of data as intrinsically less desirable; nor do they believe that a proper balance would be struck between data user and data subject by requiring, for example, automatic notification and consent procedures. More generally, they believe that, under the new approach to harmonisation, single market measures should be confined to minimum essential requirements; they note that the activities of the security services lie outside the treaty of Rome. The Government would be prepared to support data protection harmonisation measures based more closely on the existing Council of Europe convention for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data.

Royal Family

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces are involved in extra costs due to security needed at the homes of members of the royal family.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In England and Wales, there are royal palaces and residences in the Metropolitan police, Thames Valley police, Norfolk constabulary, Gloucestershire constabulary and Northamptonshire police force areas. Details of any operational policing costs are a matter for the chief officers concerned.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces are involved in extra costs due to Prevention of Terrorism Act controls at ports.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Port controls under the Prevention of Terrorism Act may apply to any person who has arrived in, or is seeking to leave, Great Britain or Northern Ireland by ship or aircraft. The level of policing, and its costs, are matters for the chief officer concerned.

Crime Witnesses

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the average delay before a witness of a crime views a witness album and its assessed effect on successful recognition.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that those witnesses to a crime who are called to view witness albums usually do so within seven days of the crime being committed. The interval will depend on several factors including the effect of the crime on the witness, the competence of the witness and the progress of the investigation. It is not possible to give a definitive assessment of the effect of any interval on successful recognition.

Knowsley Magistrates Courts

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of revenue and capital expenditure for magistrates courts in Knowsley for each court for each of the last five years and as budgeted for the current financial year.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally is given in the table. This relates to net expenditure eligible for specific grant by the Knowsley magistrates courts committee as a whole. An approved level of capital spending for 1991-92 has not yet been set.

	Net current expenditure £	Capital financing/ expenditure[1] £
1986-87	544,056	48,203
1987-88	581,826	44,396
1988-89	656,741	45,933
1989-90	673,745	47,512
1990-91	[2]821,000	85,720
1991-92	[3]871,039	—

[1] From 1986-87 to 1989-90: capital financing costs, ie debt redemption, interest charges and revenue contributions to capital outlay. For 1990-91: approved capital expenditure (the actual expenditure figure is not yet available) plus estimated loan charges on pre-April 1990 debt.
[2] Provisional outturn.
[3] Budget estimate at forecast outturn prices.

Immigration Information (Glasgow Airport)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to reopen the Home Office immigration public information desk at Glasgow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The arrangements for the public inquiry office at Glasgow airport are under review. We hope to reach a decision shortly.

Young Offenders and Remand Prisoners

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what future arrangements are to be made for the accommodation of those young offenders and remand prisoners formerly held at Her Majesty's prison Pucklechurch and now located at Her Majesty's prison Gloucester and Her Majesty's prison Cardiff; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received about the availability of resources at Her Majesty's prison Gloucester and Her Majesty's prison Cardiff to hold young offenders and remand prisoners.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am aware that there are a number of difficulties involved in accommodating young offenders from the Avon area in Gloucester and Cardiff prisons. These are being addressed in consultation with the area manager concerned and taking into account the current review of the whole prison estate. The future of Pucklechurch is part of that review and we hope to announce the results shortly.

Isle of Man

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what help has been requested of the United Kingdom Government by the Isle of Man legislature or judiciary within the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 18 March 1991, c. 30]*: The Isle of Man legislature or judiciary do not customarily request help from the United Kingdom Government. The Government do, however, regularly receive, and respond to, a wide range of requests from the Isle of Man Government for information, advice and services, in some instances under reciprocal arrangements between the United Kingdom and the island, including in relation to the formulation, scrutiny and operation of provisions of Isle of Man legislation and in relation to the island's system of civil and criminal justice. A central, chronological record of the number and exact nature of such requests is not kept.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many complaints were received by or concerning the electricity share information office in relation to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales;

(2) what is the total number of complaints received on share allocations in the privatisation of *(a)* the regional electricity companies and *(b)* the generating companies of England and Wales by his Department and by the electricity share information office.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The records kept by the electricity share information office—SIO—were designed to enable telephoned or written inquiries of all types to be dealt with readily, rather than to enable one type subsequently to be distinguished from another on a statistical basis. It would entail disproportionate expense to conduct a precise analysis now. However, my Department estimates that the written complaints received following the share allocations were equivalent to about one in 5,000 of the number of applications received in both offers. Only a small percentage of these made any complaint about the SIO itself.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the total cost of operating the electricity share information office for the purpose of privatising *(a)* the distribution companies and *(b)* the generating companies of England and Wales;

(2) what was the total estimated cost of the electricity share information service in each of the past two financial years; and in what way its staff contracts will expire or be terminated.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The cost to Government of setting up and operating the electricity share information office in respect of the privatisation of the electricity industry in England and Wales was zero in 1989-90 and £12·8 million in 1990-91. It is not meaningful to apportion this between the offers for sale of the regional electricity companies and the generating companies since the principal facilities, including the initial register, were used for both flotations.

My Department contracted the project management of the office to Kleinwort Benson Limited, which was responsible for its day-to-day staffing and operation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive the next report from Touche Ross on the detection of multiple share application fraud in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My officials are in regular contact with Touche Ross on the subject of multiple applications and fraud. I expect to receive a report from Touche Ross covering both electricity sales in England and Wales towards the end of this year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had from stockbrokers

employed on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry concerning delayed payment of fees or commissions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question on 6 June. Since that reply four more stockbrokers have made inquiries.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of the 12 regional electricity companies and the two fossil-fuelled generating companies of England and Wales concerning the completion of payments of fees and commissions to stockbroking firms employed in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The companies have no locus in either the fees payable to the Government's stockbrokers or the commissions payable to stockbroking firms in respect of selling commissions.

Fast Reactors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he has given to the need for fast reactors as an integral part of reprocessing plutonium in obsolete nuclear weapons.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he is giving to European co-operation in fast reactors in relation to design after the middle of 1993.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government will keep its position on the European fast reactor collaboration under review in the light of future developments.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place his Department's proposals for decommissioning civil nuclear power stations in the Library.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department of Energy has no proposals for decommissioning civil nuclear power stations. Decommissioning is a matter for nuclear power station operators to consider within the guidelines on safety and environmental protection set by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out in convenient form the information he has on load factors of nuclear power stations in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the USA, *(c)* France, *(d)* Germany, *(e)* Japan and *(f)* Brazil.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is set out in the table. The data are taken from the April 1991 edition of the Journal *Nuclear Engineering International.*

Country	*1990 average load factor*	*Lifetime load factor to end 1990*
	Percentage	*Percentage*
United Kingdom	51·8	49·2
United States of America	64·6	59·4
France	62·9	62·3
Germany	68·4	71·9
Japan	71·2	67·9
Brazil	39·2	22·3

The load factor is defined as the ratio of electricity generated to potential generation if the plant in question operated continuously at its design capacity.

Comparisons of load factors between countries should be treated with caution. For a variety of reasons, they do not necessarily reflect the operating availability of reactors.

Photovoltaics

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to support a programme of development of photovoltaics as presented to his Department by Sir John Cadogan FRS.

Mr. Moynihan: On 8 May I announced that the Government are to fund a £250,000 programme of research into the use of solar power for electricity production. We believe that photovoltaics is a renewable technology which has considerable potential, particularly when incorporated into the fabric of a building, and it is towards this area that the Department's programme will be focused.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Egypt

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations regarding the torture and imprisonment of three converts to Christianity in Egypt; and if he has made any recent representations to the Egyptian Government regarding them.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received many representations expressing concern about the plight of the three Christian detainees in Egypt. He raised the matter with the then Egyptian Foreign Minister when they met in Cairo on 1 May.

START

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have been consulted by the Soviet and United States Governments regarding the use to which fissile material from warheads withdrawn under the strategic arms reductions talks will be put.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The provisions of the START agreement are a matter for the United States and Soviet Union.

Boat People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at what date, given current progress, he expects to complete the screening of those boat people currently living in detention centres in Hong Kong, including the appeals against screening decisions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The rate of screening depends on the rates of arrival and repatriation. Vietnamese migrants are currently screened approximately 24 months after their arrival in Hong Kong.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conditions within detention centres and camps for boat people in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Wherever possible, United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees' recommendations for camp conditions in respect of food, nutrition and water standards have been adopted.

Although it has not yet been possible to meet in full United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees' recommendation on space standards and toilet provisions, the opening of a new detention facility at Tai a Chau will enable further improvements to be made. The possibility of further improvements will depend mainly on the flow of new arrivals and the rate at which non-refugees can be returned to Vietnam.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts regarding an international solution to the problem of the Vietnamese boat people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the recent joint declaration of the European Community-Association of South-East Asian Nations ministerial meeting held in Luxembourg on 30-31 May 1991, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what accommodation is provided for families in detention centres in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Wherever possible, conditions within the 10 detention centres are in accordance with recommendations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the reasons of those boat people who have refused voluntary repatriation from Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are many reasons why Vietnamese migrants have so far refused voluntary repatriation, but like many other non-refugees throughout the world it appears that the majority believe that they will ultimately be allowed to resettle in other countries. In the comprehensive plan of action, which was agreed to deal with this situation and which has recently been reconfirmed, it clearly states that all non-refugees must return to their country of origin.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many family groups with children are detained in camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many boat people have died in detention centres in Hong Kong since they were established; and if he will give their ages and causes of death.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the establishment of detention centres on 16 June 1988 there have been 78 deaths. The Hong Kong Government do not hold information on the ages and causes of death.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of boat people resident in detention centres in Hong Kong have taken the option of voluntary repatriation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are currently fewer than 500 volunteers for repatriation in the camps in Hong Kong. This represents less than 1 per cent. of the current camp population.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many boat people are currently detained in camps in Hong Kong; and if he will give the numbers within the age groups *(a)* up to 12, *(b)* 12 to 21, *(c)* 21 to 40, *(d)* 40 to 60, and *(e)* 60 plus years old.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 5 June 1991 there were a total of 58,122 Vietnamese refugees and Vietnamese migrants in camps in Hong Kong.

Statistics are kept only on the ages of those determined to be non-refugees or who are awaiting screening. Of the 46,384 of these in camps on 2 May 1991, 2,030 were under one year old; 12,979 between one and 15; 29,149 between 16 and 39; 2,066 between 40 and 59; and 160, 60 and over.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to maintain contact with boat people repatriated to Vietnam from Hong Kong; and what information he has on their current condition in Vietnam.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who is responsible for all post-return monitoring, recently reported that there have been no indications that any of the 8,500 returnees has suffered ill-treatment on return to Vietnam. This finding is corroborated by the British embassy in Hanoi which has its own limited monitoring programme.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of screening boat people giving figures for the numbers *(a)* screened, *(b)* granted refugee status, *(c)* denied refugee status, *(d)* who have appealed against the result of their screening, *(e)* of appeals that have been heard, and *(f)* of cases in which the appeal has decided in favour of the appellant.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: From the introduction of screening in Hong Kong on 16 June 1988 until 31 May 1991 a total of 24,299 boat people had been screened by the Hong Kong immigration department. Of these, 3,313 were granted and 20,986 denied refugee status. With only a very few exceptions, all appeal. Eighteen thousand, one hundred and twenty-two of these appeals have been heard, of which 2,538 were decided in favour of the appellant.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of orphaned children among the boat people detained in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No record is kept of the number of orphaned children in Hong Kong. All unaccompanied minors, whether or not orphans, are put in the care of a responsible adult while in Hong Kong.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provision is being made at the detention centres in Hong Kong for the provision of health care and education for detainees.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Wherever possible United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' recommendations for camp conditions have been adopted. Food is provided in accordance with dietary scales drawn up by Hong Kong Government dieticians and UNHCR technical advisers. Babies are provided with special clothing and all children receive personal sanitation items, such as soap, towels and tooth brushes. Well baby clinics are run by voluntary agencies to monitor the health of babies under the age of five and all children and babies receive a free immunisation service.

Education programmes run by voluntary agencies co-ordinated by UNHCR provide for pre-school education for children between the ages of 6 and 12 and secondary education between the ages of 12 and 16. There is a library in each camp and educational videos are shown.

Vietnam

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has collected concerning conditions in Vietnam in the new economic zones and about the prevalance of religious persecution and the number of re-education camps.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that the Vietnamese policy of moving people to under-populated areas from the over-populated river plains has caused some hardship, but we believe that this policy has now been superseded by voluntary population movement. We have no information on the number of re-education camps. According to the Vietnamese Government, people are not persecuted for their religious beliefs.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the attitude of the Vietnamese Government and penalties under the legal system for the offence of leaving Vietnam without official permission.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the statement of 30 April 1991 of the fourth steering committee of the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees, Vietnam confirms that, in accordance with accepted international understandings, no asylum-seeker who returns would face persecution and reaffirms its previously expressed undertaking to permit the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees full and unhindered access to returnees in the exercise of UNHCR's monitoring function. The steering committee itself noted with satisfaction that there have been no indications that any of the 8,500 returnees has suffered ill-treatment on return.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of people currently in prison for their political or religious beliefs in Vietnam.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: According to the Vietnamese Government, people are not imprisoned for their religious beliefs, but only when the practice of those beliefs results in their breaking the law or undermining national security. We have confirmation of four priests in re-education camps. The Vietnamese authorities claim that there are currently fewer than 130 prisoners in such camps who, it is generally acknowledged, have been imprisoned for their political beliefs. The total number of people in arbitrary detention in Vietnam is estimated to be at least 2,000.

Middle East (Humanitarian Aid)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish an updated chart showing, in United States dollars, the contributions made by each country, including the United Kingdom, to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the regional humanitarian plan of action for the middle east.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has committed US $8,095,000 bilaterally since January to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. During the period 15 January to 28 May we understand from UNHCR that it received pledges totalling US $148,066,561 as set out in the table.

Donor	*US dollars*
Australia	855,839
Austria	1,910,000
Canada	4,997,479
Denmark	8,306,378
Finland	3,955,100
France	1,550,388
Germany	20,476,190
Iceland	88,497
Ireland	237,342
Italy	650,423
Japan	42,700,000
Netherlands	3,002,390
New Zealand	147,700
Norway	3,843,983
Sweden	9,182,091
Switzerland	2,359,020
United Kingdom	8,095,000
United States of America	12,500,000
Yugoslavia	225,225
European Community (IGO)	21,439,024
Other non-governmental donations	1,544,492
Total	148,066,561

Fishing (South Atlantic)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that the krill fishery around South Georgia and the South Orkney islands be banned and that immediate conservation measures are introduced at the next meeting of the parties to the convention on the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In successive meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources—CCAMLR—the United Kingdom has argued for precautionary limits on krill catches, although there is as yet no scientific evidence that krill stocks have been adversely affected by fishing. CCAMLR decisions are taken by consensus, and a precautionary limit has not to date been agreed. At the next meeting we shall again press strongly for such a limit.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conservation measures his Department is considering following the British Antarctic survey report on the fish and krill population around South Georgia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Conservation of fish stocks around South Georgia, outside the 12-mile territorial limit, is the responsibility of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. At the next meeting, in October, the United Kingdom will press for strict conservation measures in light of the latest scientific evidence. Measures under consideration include a ban on fin-fishing and a precautionary limit on krill catches.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now ban fin-fishing around South Georgia to protect existing fish populations.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Conservation of fish stocks around South Georgia, outside the 12-mile territorial limit, is the responsibility of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. At the next meeting of the Commission the United Kingdom will base its recommendations on the scientific evidence available; a ban on fin-fishing around South Georgia in the coming year is under consideration.

Commercial Charging

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of the receipts from commercial charging for market information inquiries and overseas states reports.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Receipts for the services for the last two financial years totalled:

	1989-90 £	*1990-91* £
Market Information Inquiry Service	50,113	216,404
Overseas Status Report Service	9,102	21,884

Note: Figures are exclusive of VAT.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from his French counterpart following the proposed accession of France to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in regard to French participation in nuclear disarmament negotiations as stipulated under the treaty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In a statement on 3 June on arms control and disarmament, the French Government announced that nuclear disarmament remained an essential objective for France, who supported the efforts of the two super powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals. France confirmed that it would take part in the process as soon as the conditions which it stipulated in 1983 had been met.

We have welcomed France's decision in principle to accede to the NPT. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs looks forward to discussing this and related issues when he next meets Mr. Dumas.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will issue a visa to Mr. Ramesh Kumar to enable him to visit the hon. Member for Hendon, North, to one of whose constituents he is married, so that the hon. Member can represent him personally at his appeal against refusal of a permit to reside in this country; what precedents exist for denying an hon. Member access to foreign citizens; and on how many occasions and for what reasons such denials have occurred.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible on the question about the issue of a visa to Ramesh Kumar. Her Majesty's Government do nothing to deny an hon. Member the right to approach foreign citizens. However, for personal contact to be made in the United Kingdom the foreign citizen must meet the requirements of the immigration rules.

European Banking Transactions

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will order an internal inquiry into the monitoring of European banking transactions by Government Communications Headquarters.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No.

Saddam Hussein

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on bringing Saddam Hussein to justice for crimes against humanity.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 7 May, Iraqi leaders bear personal responsibility under international law for their actions. This principle was reiterated in United Nations Security Council resolution 674. In the case of both the Geneva conventions of 1949 and the genocide convention of 1948, Iraqi leaders can, in law, be brought to national court or international tribunal. We and our EC partners have asked the United Nations Secretary-General to investigate how this might be achieved.

Kurdish People

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effective protection the Kurds in the safe havens will receive after the allies withdraw from the areas in question.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are doing everything we can to ensure the persecution the Kurds have suffered at the hands of Saddam Hussein does not happen again. Considerable reassurance should be provided by the deployment of United Nations relief workers and field service personnel, who will monitor the security situation and report any abuses to the United Nations Secretary-General. We are discussing with our coalition partners what other arrangements might be put in place to deter Saddam Hussein from further aggression.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has

received from representatives of the Kurdish community in northern Iraq over the withdrawal of allied forces from the areas of the safe havens.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in regular contact with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq and are monitoring closely developments arising from the agreement in principle reached between Kurdish leaders and the Iraqi Government in April.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions relating to the safety and security of the people involved are to be fulfilled before the allies leave the areas of the safe havens by the date announced, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made it clear in our contacts with Kurdish leaders that allied forces cannot remain in northern Iraq indefinitely. No decisions have yet been reached on the timing of a final withdrawal; we and our coalition partners are doing everything we can to create the climate of security and reassurance necessary to ensure respect for the fundamental human and political rights of the Kurdish people.

Irish Banks (Security)

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland on the subject of the commercial security of Irish banks.

Mr. Hurd: The Government are not aware of any such representations.

Expo 92

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will allow the Government of Gibraltar to have use of part of the British pavilion at the Expo 92 exhibition in Seville; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The British pavilion at Expo 92 will be designed to present a single, integrated theme. There will be no separate representation of United Kingdom counties, regions or dependent territories.

Mr. Paul Anderson and Mr. Nigel Comley

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken with regard to Mr. Paul Anderson and Mr. Nigel Comley's request to the British embassy in Addis Ababa to leave Ethiopia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Although the airport remains officially closed, the British embassy was able to arrange for Mr. Anderson and Mr. Comley to leave Addis Ababa for Nairobi in a private charter aircraft on 6 June 1991.

The Gulf

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when Her Majesty's Government first became aware of the participation of German-owned companies in the manufacture of poison gas and chemicals in Iraq; and when they became aware of the participation of German-owned companies in the extension of Scud missiles; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the issue of the participation of German-owned companies in the manufacture of poison gas and chemicals and the extension of Scud missiles was raised with representatives of the German authorities; and what response was received;

(3) what advice he has had from the German Government about the inquiries which they have made into the participation of German-owned companies in the manufacture of gas and chemical poisons and in the extension of Scud missiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is not our practice to reveal such information. Responsibility for enforcing German export control legislation rests with the German Government.

SCOTLAND

Junior Doctors (Working Hours)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the average hours worked weekly by junior doctors in Scottish hospitals since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the actual number of hours worked by junior doctors is not available centrally. The average number of hours for which junior doctors were contracted was 85·5 in 1989 and 85·1 in 1990; these figures include time spent on call after normal hours as well as those spent working during the day.

The Government are committed to reducing junior doctors' hours of work to acceptable levels and a major package of guidance about the implementation of the "heads of agreement" which was reached with the profession last year is to be issued to health boards shortly.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and compouter consultancy contracts, excluding hardward and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure on management and computer consultancy contracts in the 1990-91 financial year was £1·375 million.

Contracts awarded were as follows:

Ernst and Young—Scottish Natural Heritage.
PIEDA—Historic Scotland, Appraisal Business Plans.
HEDRA—Historic Scotland, Information Systems Strategy.
Quality Consulting Services—Prison Workshops System, Quality Management System.
Marketing Initiatives Ltd.—Development and Delivery of Scottish Prison Service Strategic Management and Planning Initiative.
Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte—Organisation Review of Scottish Prison Service.
P-E International—Scottish Office Superannuation Division.
SRU Management Consultants—Strategic Framework for NHS.
William Shaw—Sore Consultancy.
Ernst and Young—Information Systems Business Review.
Peat Marwick McLintock—Highlands and Islands Veterinary Service.

PIEDA—Aerial Surveillance Operations.
CCTA Systems Consultancy Service—Information Systems Strategy Study.
CCTA Systems Consultancy Service—Provision of advice and guidance on Information Systems Strategy Studies.
HEDRA Ltd.—Review of management approach to Information Technology.
PA Consulting Services Ltd.—Procurement Services on behalf of Scottish Criminal Record Office.
Tomlinson Associates—Evaluation of Land Resources Geographic Information Systems.
Taylor Woodrow Management and Engineering Ltd.—National Response Plan Exercise.
SIAS Ltd.—NESA Development (Economic Assessment of Trunk Road Scheme).
JMP Ltd./Dunsmore Data—Scottish Road Traffic Database.
CS Consultants—Personal Computer In-House Consultancy.
CS Consultants—Roads Financial Monitoring system.
MVA Ltd.—Route Evaluation by Vehicle Simulation.
Dunsmore Data—Development of Bridges Database.
The Scottish Vocational Educational Council—Programme for Analysis of Examination Results.
The Scottish Examinations Board—Programme for Analysis of Examination Results.
The Scottish Council for Educational Technology—Programme for Analysis of Categories of work.
The Scottish Council for Educational Technology—Development of Performance Indicator Analysis programme.
Micro-Electronics Educational Development Centre—Room Utilisation Programme development.

None of the contracts shown was awarded by executive agencies. As indicated, however, the second and third contracts shown related to Historic Scotland, which was established as an agency on 1 April 1991.

Vets

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of vets employed by the Scottish Office in each year since 1974.

Mr. Lang: Members of the state veterinary service are employed throughout Great Britain by MAFF. The 59 members of SVS staff in Scotland are responsible for giving veterinary advice to my Department.

Works of Art

Mr. Bill Walker : To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any works of art have been accepted in lieu of inheritance tax since he last made an announcement.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that the following work has been accepted in lieu of inheritance tax.

Item	*Amount of Tax Satisfied*
Portrait of Patrick Home, attributed to Sir Joshua Renolds	£20,000

The portrait has been allocated to the National Galleries of Scotland and is to be kept at Paxton house, Paxton, Berwickshire.

Protected Sites

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of *(a)* Coulport, *(b)* Glen Mallan, *(c)* Loch Goil, *(d)* Campbelltown, *(e)* Rothesay, *(f)* Loch Striven, *(g)* Loch Fyne, *(h)* Brodick, *(i)* Lamlash bay, *(j)* East Loch Tarbert, *(k)* Broadford, Portree, *(l)* Braewick bay, *(m)* Bressay sound, *(n)* Dales voe, *(o)* Loch Ewe and *(p)* Thurso bay are covered in whole or part by *(a)* sites of special scientific interest, *(b)* areas of outstanding natural beauty, *(c)* environmentally sensitive areas or *(d)* Ramsar sites.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1991]:* There is no designation of land as "areas of outstanding natural beauty" in Scotland, but some of the places in question are part of national scenic areas identified by the Countryside Commission for Scotland. None of the locations forms part of an environmentally sensitive area or a site designated under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance. Otherwise the information is as follows:

Area	*Designation*	
	(a) Site of Special Scientific Interest	*(b) National Scenic Area*
Loch Fyne	•	—
Brodick	—	•
Broadford, Portree	•	—
Braewick Bay	•	•
Dales Voe	•	—
Loch Ewe	—	•
Thurso Bay	•	—

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express at constant prices, taking 1985 as a base, the capital allocation to Greater Glasgow health board in each year from 1985 to 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 June 1991]:* The information requested expressed in constant prices, taking 1985 as base, is as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	24·288
1986-87	17·899
1987-88	17·958
1988-89	18·245
1989-90	22·759
1990-91	17·770

In addition, there are private and voluntary sector bodies which undertake capital development and with which health boards are free to negotiate partnership agreements for the provision of health care.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the line of route of the M80 to Haggs will be determined before 30 June 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* It is intended to present the proposals for the two schemes which constitute the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs to the regional and district councils and other affected parties later this year. Thereafter it is hoped that a draft order detailing the line of the route can be published early in 1992. The order will be made once the statutory procedures have been completed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received in opposition to the granting of trust status to the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: I have received many representations about the health and personal social services reforms. I have had no representations about the Royal group of hospitals' applications for trust status on which consultations have recently started.

Road Transport Licensing Scheme

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the budgetary allocation to the road transport licensing scheme in each year since 1 April 1986.

Mr. Needham: Expenditure on road transport licensing in Northern Ireland in the financial years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 was £388,686, £405,362 and £448,123 respectively. Expenditure details for earlier years are not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The budgetary allocation for 1991-92 is £470,000.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hauliers are registered with the road transport licensing scheme.

Mr. Needham: The number of hauliers holding current road freight operators' licences in Northern Ireland was 1,515 at 31 May 1991.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many inspections in respect of the road transport licensing scheme have been carried out in each year since 1 April 1986.

Mr. Needham: The number of vehicles inspected by road transport licensing branch staff in each financial year from 1 April 1986 was:

	Number
1986-87	10,210
1987-88	13,875
1988-89	11,805
1989-90	13,615
1990-91	15,489

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many inspectors were employed in the road transport licensing scheme in each year from 1 April 1986; and how many are currently employed.

Mr. Needham: The average number of staff employed on road transport inspection duties in each financial year from 1 April 1986 was as follows:

	Average number
1986-87	8·6
1987-88	7·2
1988-89	7·2
1989-90	7·2
1990-91	7·5

The number currently employed is eight.

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has made to the report from the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights on religious and political discrimination and equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I am still considering the many detailed and complex recommendations of the report.

Political Talks

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the names of the possible candidates for the position of independent chairman of strand 2 of the Ulster talks who have been suggested by the Social Democratic and Labour party; and how many of these were rejected by *(a)* the Alliance party, *(b)* Her Majesty's Government, *(c)* the Government of the Republic of Ireland, *(d)* the Democratic Unionist party and *(e)* the Ulster Unionist party, respectively;

(2) if he will list the names of the possible candidates for the position of independent chairman of strand 2 of the Ulster talks who have been suggested by the Democratic Unionist party and have been rejected by *(a)* the Social Democratic and Labour party and *(b)* the Government of the Republic of Ireland;

(3) if he will list the names of the possible candidates for the position of independent chairman of strand 2 of the Ulster talks who have been suggested by the Alliance party of Northern Ireland; and how many of these were rejected by *(a)* Her Majesty's Government, *(b)* the Government of the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* the Social Democratic and Labour party, *(d)* the Democratic Unionist party and *(e)* the Ulster Unionist party, respectively;

(4) if he will list the names of the possible candidates for the position of independent chairman of strand 2 of the Ulster talks who have been suggested by the Ulster Unionist party and have been rejected by *(a)* the Social Democratic and Labour party and *(b)* the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) on 6 June 1991, *Official Report*, column *325*.

Advance Factories

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at what locations advance factories are presently being constructed.

Mr. Needham: Advance factories are currently being constructed at Glenn road, Belfast and Ballygomartin road, Belfast under the "Making Belfast Work" programme.

Fire Stations

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the criteria for changing a part-time fire station into a full-time station.

Mr. Needham: The criteria for changing a part-time fire station into a full-time station are those which form part of a review of fire cover in any particular brigade area. The following factors are taken into account in any such review:

risk category
attendance times
response time
travel time
availability of retained personnel, and
the number of fire calls

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* A total of 263 energy audits were carried out over the last five years in the Northern Ireland Government Office estate.

A statement of main conclusions for each audit could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* There is one dedicated energy manager in the NI energy conservation unit for the Northern Ireland Government Office estate. Three person-years were devoted to energy management in this estate by the unit in 1990-91.

There is no dedicated energy manager in the Northern Ireland Office in London.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The information requested for the years prior to 1986-87 is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The amount spent on new energy efficiency measures in the Northern Ireland Government Office estate from 1986-87 onwards is as follows:

	Cash terms £	*1990-91 money terms* £
1986-87	25,000	32,897
1987-88	72,000	91,539
1988-89	24,000	28,279
1989-90	25,000	27,250
1990-91	16,500	16,500

It is not possible to disaggregate costs for the Northern Ireland Office in London.

THE ARTS

Libraries

30. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what action he is taking to encourage the use of libraries especially by children and young people.

Mr. Renton: The aim of my public library development incentive scheme is to extend and improve public library service in England, and most award-winning projects promote their better use. Two projects have been directly concerned with children and young people.

"Kill the Messenger"

34. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will acquire a copy of "Kill the Messenger" by Sir Bernard Ingham for his office's library.

Mr. Renton: No.

Museum and Gallery Collections

35. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how he will encourage national museums and galleries to make their collections accessible to people across the whole United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: I am glad to say that national muesums and galleries already do a great deal to make their collections more accessible to people across the country by means of outstations and travelling exhibitions. I have asked all the national museums and galleries for which I am responsible to set out in their current corporate plans to further action they propose to make their collections more widely accesible.

London City Ballet

36. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he can yet announce measures to ensure the continuance of the London City Ballet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I fully set out my position, and that of the Arts Council, in this House on 3 May. Neither the Government nor the Arts Council can make a firm commitment of revenue support for London City Ballet at this time, but the Arts Council has agreed to use its best endeavours to help find a way of securing the company's future. The board of London City Ballet has now decided that the company should continue to operate at least until 1 April 1992. I welcome the news that the board has felt able to proceed in this way.

Industrial Heritage

37. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will meet the chairman of the North West Regional Arts Council to discuss support for the preservation of industrial heritage.

Mr. Renton: Support for the preservation of the industrial heritage is a concern of the north west area museums service. I shall be meeting the chairman of the service on 13 June.

Welsh Arts Provision

38. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chair of the Welsh arts council to discuss arts provision in Wales.

39. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the Welsh arts council to discuss its funding priorities.

Mr. Renton: I meet the chairman of the Welsh arts council from time to time for discussions on matters of mutual interest. I visited the Welsh arts council's offices and met the chairman and staff on 2 May and enjoyed a very useful meeting.

Merseyside Arts Funding

Mr. Parry: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit the Merseyside region to meet local authority leaders to discuss the state of arts funding in the area.

Mr. Renton: I will be visiting Liverpool on Tuesday, June 25 but I have no current plans to meet local authority leaders on that day.

Museum Documentation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received concerning the work of the Museum Documentation Association on future modes in relation to the Museum and Galleries Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I have received no such representations about the work of the Museum Documentation Association—MDA. However, I understand that the Museums and Galleries Commission has recently reviewed the work of the MDA and has substantially increased its allocation to the association over the last two years.

Museum Entry and Retrieval Systems

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to set common national and international standards for museums' entry and retrieval systems.

Mr. Renton: I have no plans at present to set up such standards; however I understand that the Museums Documentation Association will be launching a data standards scheme in conjunction with the Museums and Galleries Commission in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

International Tropical Timber Organisation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will transfer responsibility for the United Kingdom's membership of the International Tropical Timber Organisation from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Overseas Development Administration.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility was transferred to the Overseas Development Administration in October 1990.

National Union of Mineworkers' Funds

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *34*, to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on Her Majesty's Government's assistance to Price Waterhouse, sequestrators of the National Union of Mineworkers, what relavant information the Government passed to the sequestrators; and what was the provenance of this information.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to my answer of 3 June to the hon. Member for Linlithgow. Information was provided to the sequestrators in confidence.

Cleeve Station

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister in Her Majesty's Government has responsibility for the work of Cleeve station, and what is Cleeve's relationship to Government Communications Headquarters.

The Prime Minister: The station at Cleeve camp, Morwenstow is GCHQ's and, as such, comes under the ministerial responsibility of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

CIVIL SERVICE

Women Civil Servants

43. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what percentage of women are now employed in grades 1 to 7 of the civil service.

Mr. Renton: On 1 April 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, 9·7 per cent. of staff in grades 1 to 7 were women. This compares with 4·5 per cent. in 1984 when the programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity for women was launched.

Civil Service College

47. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants attended the Civil Service college in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the last available year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: About 9,000 civil servants attended the Civil Service college in 1979 whereas in the financial year 1990-91 the figure was approximately 17,600. I am pleased that over the last 11 years the number of college students has increased in this way.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Armaments Exports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table indicating the value of exports from the United Kingdom of armaments or arms-related products, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information may be found in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990"—volume 2, Cm. 1022-II.

Flexible Manufacturing Technology Ltd.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will investigate the involvement of Flexible Manufacturing Technology Ltd. in the possible supply of equipment to Iraq covered by an arms export embargo.

Mr. Sainsbury: Investigations of possible breaches of United Kingdom export controls are carried out by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. It has been the policy of this and successive Governments not to reveal details of such investigations.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received a report from the Securities and Investments Board on the excercise of its functions under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: A copy of the board's report, made in accordance with section 117 of the Act, was laid before Parliament today. The report covers the period from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991. Copies are now available in the Library.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations with particular reference to the multi-fibre agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 5 June 1991]*: Pending conclusion of the Uruguay round, participants met on 16 May to discuss an interim extension of the existing multi-fibre arrangement. No decision was reached and a further meeting is expected to take place later this month.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research Councils

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer of 2 May, *Official Report*, columns *315-18*, how many staff in total were employed by each research council in 1990-91; how many managers eligible for management training were employed by each research council in 1990-91; and how many man-days or equivalent of *(a)* management training and *(b)* training overall was provided by each research council in 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The details are as follows:

	Staff employed		*Man-days of training*	
	Total	*Managers*[1]	*Management*	*All*
Agricultural and Food Research Council	4,250	2,569	[1]895	[2]2,092
Economic and Social Research Council	117	65	55	[3]722
Medical Research Council	3,300	[4]N/A	[4]N/A	[4]N/A
Natural Environment Research Council	2,880	2,000	1,600	5,400
Science and Engineering Research Council	2,615	1,788	1,584	5,230

Notes:
[1]Staff at or above Executive/Scientific Officer level or equivalent.
[2]Excludes training in grant-aided institutes which are not collected centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.
[3]Includes 471 man-days of training on the new computer installation.
[4]Information is not collected centrally and could only be obtained from the MRC's 55 institutes at disproportionate cost.

Teachers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he intends to take to make teacher training more relevant to the actuality of the classroom.

Mr. Fallon: The Secretary of State's criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher training courses have recently been revised to reflect more closely what is expected of beginning teachers, including the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988. Institutions are now required, inter alia, to provide that:

(i) courses of less than four years should include at least 75 days, and four year courses at least 100 days, of teaching practice and other school experience, in more than one school;
(ii) experienced school teachers must contribute to course planning, student selection, lectures and seminars;
(iii) lecturers must periodically review their own school teaching experience which, by academic year 1992-93 has to be the equivalent of not less than one term in every five years;
(iv) no degree or other qualification attracting qualified teacher status should be awarded unless the student has demonstrated a satisfactory standard of practical classroom work;
(v) all courses should include training in the application of the students' subject specialisms to the teaching and assessment of pupils.

These criteria are to be further reviewed by the end of the year.

The Government have also introduced the articled teacher scheme, in which 80 per cent. of the training takes place in schools. The first cohort began their training in September 1990; a second cohort will start in September 1991 and the Government have recently announced funding for a third cohort. The licensed teacher scheme, which has also been introduced recently, allows suitably qualified candidates to be employed by local education authorities as classroom teachers and receive on the job training. The Government are evaluating both these schemes since we believe that as much of initial training as possible should take place in the school.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers are now in post; and how many were in post 12 months ago.

Mr. Fallon: Provisional figures for January 1991 show that there were 393,720 full-time equivalent teachers in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in England. In January 1990 there were 398,542.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average qualification of entrants into teacher training.

Mr. Fallon: The most recent information available about the qualifications of entrants to initial teacher training is shown in the tables.

Table 1
Mean A Level Scores of entrants to undergraduate courses of Initial Teacher Training in England 1989

	University	*Public Sector*
A Level Score	7·2	5·3

Note: A Grade "A" at A level scores 5 points, a grade E scores 1 point.

Table 2
Degree class of those recruited to postgraduate courses of Initial Teacher Training in England and Wales (Universities) 1989

Degree	*per cent of total*
Higher (eg MA, PhD)	4·4
1st	3·1
2i	33·1
2ii	39·8
2	1·0
3rd	7·9
Pass	7·7
Other	3·0

Note: Comparable data is not available for public sector institutions.

Table 3
Degree class of those who successfully completed postgraduate courses of initial teacher training in England and Wales (public sector institutions) 1988

Degree	*per cent of total*
1st honours	3·0
2nd honours	76·3
Other and unclassified honours	8·0
Ordinary/pass	12·7

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of total education spending is spent on teacher pay and training.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988-89, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available, some 36 per cent. of total education spending was spent on teacher pay and training. This includes expenditure on school teachers' salaries, employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions, and in-service training for school teachers supported by the LEA training grants scheme —LEATGS. LEAs may also provide for in-service training additional to that supported by the LEATGS, but this information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much teacher pay has increased for each of the past five years.

Mr. Eggar: School teachers' pay settlements since March 1986 are as follows:

Date of increase	*Percentage*
31 March 1986	1·6
1 April 1986	5·7
1 January 1987 / 1 October 1987	16·4
1 April 1988	4·73
1 April 1989	6·3
1 April 1990 / 1 January 1991	9·3

Subject to parliamentary approval, the 1991-92 settlement will be worth 11·3 per cent. in a full year.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers took early retirement in each of the past three years; and if he will give the figure expressed as a percentage of the total teacher force for each of these years.

Mr. Fallon: The number of teachers who took early retirement—that is retired between age 50 and 59—in each of the past three years is shown in the table. The numbers of retirements relate to teachers in the maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools sector. The numbers are also expressed as a percentage of the full-time teacher force in those establishments at 1 January in each year.

Financial year	*Premature retirements*	*Percentage of teacher force*
1988-89	7,875	1·9
1989-90	8,427	2·1
1990-91	9,710	2.4

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers left the profession in each of the past three years for employment outside teaching; and what that was expressed as a pecentage of the total teacher force.

Mr. Fallon: The table shows estimates of the number of full-time teachers who resigned from maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales in each calendar year from 1987 to 1989 to take up non-educational employment, together with the proportion they represented of the full-time teaching force.

Full-time teachers resigning to take up jobs outside teaching

	Number	*Percentage of all full-time teachers*
1987	2,560	0·7
1988	3,320	0·9
1989	3,280	0·9

Source: LACSAB survey of teacher resignations

Pupil-teacher Ratio

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current pupil-teacher ratio in England.

Mr. Fallon: In 1990-91 the overall pupil-teacher ratio in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England is provisionally estimated to have been 17·25 pupils per teacher.

Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what formal reply his Department has made to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in respect of their request for additional funds for pay and compensation for the recent increase in value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has made clear to the CVCP that it is for the committee and institutions as employers to reach a pay settlement within the aggregate resources at their disposal; and that, against the background of an increase in public funding for universities in 1991-92 of 10 per cent. for the second year running, the Government are unable to provide any further sums for extra VAT costs not recoverable through higher output charges.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to give financial aid to the Welsh plant breeding station, Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, during the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The funding of new facilities at the Welsh plant breeding station are as detailed in my reply to the hon. Member on 12 March 1991, *Official Report*, column *449-50*.

In addition the station, which is part of the Agricultural and Food Research Council's institute of grassland and environmental research, will continue to receive support from the AFRC science budget funds, currently estimated at approximately £2·5 million a year.

Kettleshume Primary School

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet the chief education officer of Cheshire county council to discuss the financial implications of the decision to close the Kettleshume Church of England primary school.

Mr. Atkins: Cheshire county council has not yet published section 12 proposals to close Kettleshume primary school. When proposals are published, the authority will be required to provide information about financial implications of closing the school. I would therefore not expect a meeting with the chief education officer to be necessary.

Early Leavers

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is for each year since 1974 the number of students in *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* higher education who left their respective schools and universities before completion of their studies; and what are the percentages for males and females in each case.

Mr. Fallon: Information for school pupils is not collected centrally.

Statistics on university students who had successfully completed full-time or sandwich first degree courses are contained in "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators in the UK", published by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Universities Funding Council. A copy of the 1990 edition has been placed in the House Library.

A-levels

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the numbers taking A-level examinations in *(a)* physics, *(b)* chemistry and *(c)* mathematics for each year from 1980.

Mr. Eggar: The total numbers of school leavers attempting A-level examinations in the subjects in question, were as follows. 1988-89 is the latest year for which information is available.

Numbers of School Leavers attempting A-level/AS
(Thousands)

	Physics	*Chemistry*	*Maths*	*All leavers*
1979-80	35·84	31·74	48·08	750·73
1980-81	38·15	34·22	50·06	733·96
1981-82	41·62	36·79	54·89	751·13
1982-83	40·72	36·30	56·12	765·52
1983-84	41·12	36·48	56·60	752·82
1984-85	38·95	35·60	56·06	736·21
1985-86	36·81	35·00	54·69	718·21
1986-87	34·13	31·95	52·81	715·99
1987-88	33·44	32·17	53·85	655·96
1988-89	32·93	30·65	51·48	617·71

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the level of parental contributions to the fees of pupils in the assisted places scheme in the next academic year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Remission of tuition fees under the assisted places scheme is dependent on the level of fees at participating schools and the amount parents can afford to contribute. Subject to parliamentary approval, the parental contribution scales will be adjusted upwards for the school year 1991-92 as set out in the table. Where the relevant income for the appropriate financial year does not exceed £8,715 the tuition fees will be wholly remitted.

Percentage

Part of relevant income to which percentage applies	*One assisted pupil*	*Each of two assisted pupils*	*Each of three assisted pupils*
That part which exceeds £8,548 but does not exceed £9,294	9·00	6·75	5·25
That part (if any) which exceeds £9,294 but does not exceed £10,054	12·00	9·00	7·00
That part (if any) which exceeds £10,054 but does not exceed £11,560	15·00	11·25	8·75
That part (if any) which exceeds £11,560 but does not exceed £13,878	21·00	15·75	12·25
That part (if any) which exceeds £13,878 but does not exceed £16,902	24·00	18·00	14·00
That part (if any) which exceeds £16,902	33·00	24·75	19·25

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Famine Relief

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department is giving to relieve famine in Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have committed over £230 million, including our share of EC actions, in emergency assistance to Africa since the beginning of 1989. Of this, over £110 million has been in response to the present food crisis in the six worst affected countries—Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola and Liberia. These amounts include the two new pledges, together worth £53 million, which I made on 15 April and 20 May respectively.

I have allocated the £53 million as follows:

(i) £20 million for food aid and delivery costs apportioned as follows:
- 27,500 tonnes to Sudan
- 27,000 tonnes to Ethiopia
- 8,000 tonnes to Somalia
- 7,500 tonnes to Mozambique
- £1 million for cereals and supplementary food for Angola.

(ii) £12 million via British non-governmental organisations—NGOs—for emergency relief work in the Horn.

(iii) £12 million to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for famine and refugee assistance allocated as follows:

£5 million for assistance in Africa
£3 million for the Horn
£3 million for Mozambican refugees in Malawi
£1 million for the Ogaden.

(iv) £3 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross for humanitarian assistance in Africa particularly in Somalia and Sudan.

(v) £3 million to NGOs for relief activities in Mozambique and Angola.

(vi) £2 million to UNICEF and United Nations agencies for activities in the Horn.

(vii) £1 million to United Nations agencies for activities in Liberia.

I have placed further details of these commitments in the Library of the House.

The allocations for the Horn are made on the assumption that the security situation allows us to deliver humanitarian assistance effectively. At present, the situation in Ethiopia and Somali is uncertain. We shall monitor events carefully and adjust the allocations where necessary.

Ethiopia

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what aid Her Majesty's Government will be giving to the Ethiopian Government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what aid Her Majesty's Government have given to aid agencies with respect to the situation in Ethiopia in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1991 we have so far provided £22·6 million in bilateral humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia. I expect to provide more during the course of this year. Our aid is channelled through mutilateral and British voluntary agencies.

In the financial year 1990-91, we provided £3·3 million in bilateral development assistance to the Ethiopian Government. I am prepared to provide a broadly similar amount in 1991-92, provided conditions allow. In addition, in 1990-91, we channelled £350,000 through British voluntary agencies under the ODA's joint funding scheme for ongoing projects.

Disaster Relief

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the Overseas Development Administration to complete its study of the options for setting up a rapid deployment force for responding to disasters.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA's review of its arrangements for managing and delivering emergency relief for disasters overseas is expected to be completed soon.

Colonial Service Pensions

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will carry out a review of the financial circumstances of United Kingdom citizens in receipt of pensions from public service for former colonial administrations with a view to providing financial enhancement in cases where depreciation of the currency in which the pension is paid has resulted in a significant fall of its value in pounds sterling.

Mrs. Chalker: No. Successive Governments have taken the view that they cannot protect the position of all those who were employed in the public services of our former colonies. Such protection is confined to those for whom the British Government acknowledge a special responsibility by virtue of their having been recruited by, or on behalf of, the Secretary of State for the Colonies for employment on expatriate terms in the central government of a colony.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from United Kingdom citizens in receipt of public service pensions from former colonial administrations regarding the current value of their pensions.

Mrs. Chalker: We regularly receive requests from pensioners who wish to be included in our overseas pension protection arrangements.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate how much it would cost to take over the payment of overseas pensions paid to Rhodesian and Zimbabwean pensioners under the terms of the Overseas Pensions Act 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not possible to estimate the cost because we hold no information about Zimbabwe public service pensioners, who were all locally appointed.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Nations Development Programme office in Cambodia is open; what is UNDP's budget for Cambodia; whether any aid has yet been spent or committed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There is no formal UNDP resident representative in Cambodia. An informal liaison office is however undertaking preparatory work in anticipation of a political settlement which would enable UNDP to support operations there. An allocation of $41·3 million has been made for Cambodia for the period 1992-96, but all funds remain frozen at present with no aid spent or committed.

EC Food Aid

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what type of food the EC's 400,000 tonnes of aid, decided on in April, will consist of; and what is the value of the food in ecu and pounds sterling, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: Food provided under the Community's special programme for Africa will consist mainly of cereals and grain such as wheat or wheatflour, maize, rice and sorghum.. The programme will also include quantities of vegetable oil, pulses and sugar. The cost of the 400,000 tonnes programme is estimated at 140 million ecu—about £97·5 million.

Africa Famine Relief

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any requests from Governments in Africa, or aid agencies, or the EC, for military assistance in distributing famine relief in Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We receive occasional suggestions for the RAF to help in distributing famine relief. We consider each request as appropriate, bearing in mind the need to make the most cost effective use of resources in responding to specific needs.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings, Scotland

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the *(a)* total number, *(b)* percentage of (i) female part-time workers, (ii) male part-time workers, (iii) female full-time workers, (iv) male full-time workers, (v) all full-time workers, (vi) all part-time workers, and (vii) all workers in (1) Scotland, (2) Great Britain and (3) each Scottish region with hourly earnings of less than £3·40.

Mr. Jackson: The figures available from the new earnings survey are given in the tables:

Full time employees on adult rates with hourly earnings less than £3·40

April 1990

	Number in the sample			*Percentage of total*		
	Women	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*
Scotland	998	638	1,636	25·0	9·5	15·3
Borders	46	..	..	61·3	..	..
Central	59	27	86	28·8	7·5	15·2
Dumfries and Galloway	..	25	60	..	14·3	22·6
Fife	70	37	107	34·1	9·9	18·5
Grampian	99	58	157	28·1	7·7	14·2
Highland	43	24	67	30·1	11·0	18·6
Lothian	148	114	262	19·1	9·5	13·2
Strathclyde	401	266	667	22·7	9·1	14·2
Tayside	91	68	159	26·8	13·3	18·7
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	..
Highlands and Islands	49	31	80	28·0	11·1	17·6
Great Britain	8,187	5,542	13,729	20·5	7·4	12·0

Source: New Earnings Survey 1990.
Notes:
(1) ".." denotes sampling error too high or numbers too small for reliable estimate.
(2) "—" denotes information not available.
(3) The survey excludes significant numbers of part-time employees with low weekly earnings.

Part time employees on adult rates with hourly earnings less than £3·40

April 1990

	Number in the sample			*Percentage of total*		
	Women	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*
Scotland	1,024	—	—	53·8	—	—
Borders	..	—	—	..	—	—
Central	..	—	—	..	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	..	—	—	..	—	—
Fife	..	—	—	..	—	—
Grampian	113	—	—	53·3	—	—
Highland	..	—	—	..	—	—
Lothian	183	—	—	52·9	—	—
Strathclyde	401	—	—	50·1	—	—
Tayside	97	—	—	58·1	—	—
Islands	..	—	—	..	—	—
Highlands and Islands	..	—	—	..	—	—
Great Britain	10,848	1,023	11,871	52·2	49·1	51·9

Source: New Earnings Survey 1990.
Notes:
(1) ".." denotes sampling error too high or numbers too small for reliable estimate.
(2) "—" denotes information not available.
(3) The survey excludes significant numbers of part-time employees with low weekly earnings.

All employees on adult rates with hourly earnings less than £3·40
April 1990

	Number in sample			*Percentage of total*		
	Women	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*
Scotland	2,022	[1]—	[1]—	34·3	[1]—	[1]—
Borders	67	[1]—	[1]—	59·3	[1]—	[1]—
Central	115	[1]—	[1]—	38·2	[1]—	[1]—
Dumfries and Galloway	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—
Fife	144	[1]—	[1]—	45·7	[1]—	[1]—
Grampian	212	[1]—	[1]—	37·6	[1]—	[1]—
Highland	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—
Lothian	331	[1]—	[1]—	29·5	[1]—	[1]—
Strathclyde	802	[1]—	[1]—	31·2	[1]—	[1]—
Tayside	188	[1]—	[1]—	37·2	[1]—	[1]—

	Number in sample			Percentage of total		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Islands	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—
Highland and Islands	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—
Great Britain	19,035	6,565	25,600	31·3	8·6	18·6

Source: New Earnings Survey 1990.

Notes:

The survey excludes significant numbers of part-time employees with low weekly earnings.

[1]— denotes information not available.

[2]— denotes sampling error too high or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of people who were receiving the enterprise allowance in London in each of the former Training Agency's area offices in each quarter since April 1987.

Mr. Forth: The former Training Agency area office breakdown of people receiving the allowance in London is shown for each quarter of each financial year in the table. Because of changes in scheme administration, it is not possible to provide a consistent table for the whole period.

Financial years	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*
1987-88				
Inner London North	2,285	2,814	2,806	2,522
East London	1,186	1,197	1,176	1,150
North London	1,429	1,505	1,522	1,423
North West London	155	14	—	131
Inner London Central	276	45	36	370
South West and West London	1,100	1,125	1,120	1,152
London South	1,293	1,319	1,275	1,172
Inner London South	1,650	1,911	2,080	2,227
Inner London East	—	—	—	55
AZTEC[1]	—	—	—	—
1988-89				
Inner London North	2,114	1,746	1,524	1,421
East London	1,076	1,012	913	826
North London	1,272	1,197	1,202	1,166
North West London	399	629	859	952
Inner London Central	696	979	1,211	1,164
South West and West London	1,213	1,354	1,491	1,551
London South	1,053	1,000	1,015	1,014
Inner London South	2,195	2,073	1,816	1,562
Inner London East	176	287	401	421
AZTEC[1]	—	—	—	—
1989-90				
Inner London North	1,375	1,538	1,489	1,455
East London	828	727	742	754
North London	1,181	1,618	1,471	1,470
North West London	800	30	12	5
Inner London Central	1,125	1,078	1,109	1,150
South West and West London	1,482	880	843	826
London South	978	805	742	685
Inner London South	1,487	2,092	2,021	2,027
Inner London East	323	224	96	5
AZTEC	—	—	—	—
1990-91				
Inner London North	1,404	1,247	1,152	1,118
East London	769	771	777	792
North London	1,374	1,241	1,186	791
North West London	—	—	—	296
Inner London Central	1,081	945	899	806
South West and West London	732	769	544	492
London South	670	568	565	547
Inner London South	1,908	1,834	1,332	1,195
Inner London East	—	—	—	—
AZTEC[1]	—	—	498	457

[1] *Note:* AZTEC Training and Enterprise Council started operating in November 1990. It took over the running of the scheme for an area previously covered by the South West and West London and Inner London South area offices.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, what was the number of people who were receiving the enterprise allowance in each quarter since April 1987.

Mr. Forth: The regional breakdown of people receiving the allowance is shown for each quarter in the table. Because of changes in scheme administration, separate data for London and the south-east are not available for financial year 1988-89.

Financial years	*First quarter*	*Second quarter*	*Third quarter*	*Fourth quarter*
1987-88				
London	9,382	9,930	10,017	10,245
South East	11,402	12,118	12,231	11,802
Western Division[1]	—	—	—	—
Eastern Division[1]	—	—	—	—
Southern Division:[1]	—	—	—	—
South West	9,790	10,288	10,085	9,979
West Midlands	9,096	9,492	9,498	9,304
East Midlands and Anglia	9,272	10,107	10,216	10,322
Yorkshire and Humberside	8,829	9,941	9,200	9,025
North West	14,498	14,911	14,715	14,257
Northern	4,717	5,051	5,174	4,119
Wales	5,750	5,904	5,944	5,869
Scotland	8,655	9,208	8,924	8,740
Great Britain	91,391	96,250	96,004	94,662
1988-89				
London	—	—	—	—
South East	—	—	—	—
Western Division[1]	7,393	6,861	6,342	5,852
Eastern Division[1]	7,508	7,557	7,831	7,602
Southern Division[1]	7,766	7,527	7,200	6,803
South West	9,877	9,852	9,776	9,289
West Midlands	9,006	8,936	9,009	8,781
East Midlands and Anglia	9,146	8,903	8,960	8,578
Yorkshire and Humberside	9,068	9,090	9,183	8,980
North West	14,100	14,034	14,359	13,909
Northern	5,316	5,380	5,373	5,311
Wales	5,852	6,049	6,290	6,255
Scotland	8,469	8,263	8,157	7,699
Great Britain	93,501	92,452	92,480	89,059
1989-90				
London	9,579	8,992	8,604	8,377
South East	8,526	8,251	8,223	7,554
Western Division[1]	—	—	—	—
Eastern Division[1]	—	—	—	—
Southern Division[1]	—	—	—	—
South West	8,617	7,874	7,123	6,501
West Midlands	8,506	7,978	7,486	6,916
East Midlands and Anglia	8,834	8,026	7,178	7,061
Yorkshire and Humberside	8,419	7,942	7,712	7,366
North West	13,404	12,735	12,065	11,436
Northern	5,127	4,851	4,469	4,252
Wales	6,086	5,757	5,418	4,896
Scotland	7,190	6,904	6,662	6,310
Great Britain	84,288	79,312	75,131	70,669
1990-91				
London	8,035	7,447	6,953	6,494
South East	7,328	6,865	6,409	6,142
Western Division[1]	—	—	—	—
Eastern Division[1]	—	—	—	—
Southern Division[1]	—	—	—	—
South West	5,903	5,460	5,012	4,642
West Midlands	6,409	5,934	5,504	5,025
East Midlands and Anglia	6,618	6,306	5,905	5,653
Yorkshire and Humberside	6,703	6,116	5,753	5,658
North West	10,836	10,094	9,391	8,816
Northern	3,956	3,681	3,386	3,257
Wales	4,023	4,237	3,982	3,636
Scotland	6,131	5,777	5,562	5,323
Great Britain	66,543	61,967	57,857	54,646

[1] *Note:* In 1988-89 the scheme was run by the Employment Service which had organised its combined London and South East Region into three operating divisions.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the amount of expenditure on the enterprise allowance scheme in London in each of the former Training Agency's area offices for each year since 1985.

Mr. Forth: The former Training Agency area office breakdown of expenditure on the allowance in London is shown for financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91 in the table. Because of changes in scheme administration, information for earlier years is not kept in the form required and could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

	Financial years	
	1989-90 (£)	*1990-91* (£)
Inner London North	3,114,640	2,620,433
East London	1,528,400	1,592,546
North London	3,090,463	2,575,644
Inner London Central	2,291,666	2,035,398
South West and West London	1,950,453	1,319,226
London South	1,770,320	1,219,906
Inner London South	4,207,400	3,237,160

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the budgets allocated for each London training and enterprise council, or for the areas to be included in future training and enterprise councils, for the enterprise allowance scheme in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Budgets for 1991-92 have been allocated by funding block rather than individual scheme. EAS forms part of funding block 3. The allocated block 3 budgets for training and enterprise councils—TECs—in the London region, including those not yet operational, are given in the table. TECs will have greater freedom and flexibility to adapt EAS to meet the needs of the local economy and to improve survival rates.

Funding block 3 budget allocations to TECs 1991-92

TEC	*Allocation £ million*	*Operational date*
AZTEC	1·430	12 November 1990
CENTEC	3·920	16 September 1991
CILNTEC	2·650	14 October 1991
LETEC	2·700	1 April 1991
NORTH	2·410	16 September 1991
NORTH WEST	1·310	August-September 1991
SOLOTEC	1·940	1 April 1991
STTEC	3·510	27 May 1991
WLTEC	1·880	19 August 1991

Steelworkers (Respiratory Disease)

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) when the Health and Safety Executive last carried out any research on non-malignant respiratory disease among steelworkers;

(2) if he will ask the Health and Safety Executive to carry out further research on non-malignant respiratory disease among steelworkers.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive has recently undertaken a review of research on chronic non-malignant respiratory disease in ferrous metal manufacturing and production workers, including the steel industry and has also commissioned a wider ranging review of the health effects of airborne substances in the ferrous foundry industry. The results are expected to be available early next year.

In addition, the HSE continues to monitor closely other relevant research programmes including current proposals for research on health issues among steelworkers in Britain submitted to the European Coal and Steel Community.

Hotels and Guest Houses

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has carried out on the effect of the VAT changes introduced in the recent Budget on small privately-owned hotels and guest houses.

Mr. Forth: My Department has made no such assessment.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small hotels and guest houses have deregistered since 1 April 1990.

Mr. Forth: In the period from 1 April 1991 to 31 May 1991, there were 693 applications to deregister from hotels and residential establishments on the ground that anticipated turnover was below the value added tax threshold.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives he proposes to engage more health and safety inspectors in Wales.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* The Health and Safety Executive has undertaken recruitment to increase the number of inspectors. This will allow a further five inspectors to be allocated to work in Wales. No difficulty in recruitment has been experienced. No special initiatives are necessary.

Tourism

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he will take to encourage the growth of employment in the tourism industry in Yorkshire.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 7 June 1991]:* In 1989 there were 127,800 people employed in the tourism industry in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, 24 per cent. more than in 1984. The Government will encourage further employment growth by reducing inflation, continuing our financial support for tourism and promoting enterprise and training through the network of training and enterprise councils now established in the region. The industry must also play its part by negotiating realistic pay settlements.

HEALTH

Northumberland Area Services

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the current waiting list for each specialty in Northumberland health authority and the number of people who have waited *(a)* for over one year and *(b)* for over two years in each specialty.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest information available, at September 1990, is given in the table. This information is on a "provider" bases, and does not relate to the district's resident population. In the year to March 1990 the number of in-patients treated has increased by 2 per cent. and since 1979 in the order of 16 per cent.

Northumberland Health Authority
Number waiting and number waiting over one year for treatment at 30 September 1990—in-patients

Specialty	*Total waiting*[1]	*Total waiting 12+months*	*Total waiting 24+months*
General surgery	450	54	9
Urology	109	7	0
Trauma and orthopaedic	801	147	57
ENT	0	0	0
Oral surgery	23	3	0
Anaesthetics	0	0	0
General medicine	7	0	0
Dermatology	0	0	0
Thoracic medicine	0	0	0
Rheumatology	0	0	0
Paediatrics	0	0	0
Geriatric medicine	8	0	0
Obs and Gyn (Obstretrics)	0	0	0
Obs and Gyn (Gynaecology)	274	15	7
GP maternity function	0	0	0
GP (non maternity)	1	0	0
Mental handicap	14	0	0
Mental illness	9	5	0
Others	0	0	0
Total	1,696	231	73

[1] Excludes self-deferred cases—those patients who refuse an offer of admission.

District Health Authorities (Waiting Times)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district health authorities have the longest average waiting time for the specialties which cover *(a)* hip replacement operations, *(b)* cataract corrections and *(c)* hernia operations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest available information, at September 1990, for those waiting for in-patient treatment, is given in the tables. The tables have been compiled on the basis of the percentage of patients waiting more than one year which is the generally accepted measure of waiting time. Direct comparisons between specialties at district health authority level can be misleading because there are considerable variations of case mix within different hospitals.

The 15 district health authorities with the highest percentage of patients waiting over 1 year

In-patient waiting lists
30 September 1990
General surgery (includes hernia operations)

North Hertfordshire
North Devon
Kingston and Esher
Bexley
Herefordshire
Dartford and Gravesham
West Essex
Riverside
Milton Keynes
Harrogate
West Lambeth
Gateshead
North East Essex
South Warwickshire
Waltham Forest

In-patient waiting lists
30 September 1990
Ophthalmology (includes cataract operations)

Kingston and Esher
Rochdale
Riverside
West Surrey and North East Hants.
Shropshire
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde
Preston
Bassetlaw
East Suffolk
Leeds Western
Bolton
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Central Manchester
Dudley
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

In-patient waiting lists
30 September 1990
Trauma and Orthopaedic (includes hip replacement operations)

Maidstone
Bristol and Weston
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's
West Norfolk and Wisbech
West Lambeth
East Suffolk
Kettering
Tunbridge Wells
Brighton
Riverside
Chichester
Herefordshire
Bloomsbury
Oldham
East Surrey

Medical Records

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how long it takes to transfer medical records from one general practice to another in each of the regions within his jurisdiction.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally.

Health Benefits Scheme

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total value of help given under the health benefits low income scheme per annum for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. Under the scheme people receiving income support or family credit and their dependants are automatically exempt from NHS charges. Other claimants who are entitled to help towards the cost of meeting NHS charges are issued with a certificate authorising either full or partial exemption from any charges which they may incur. There is no limit on the number of occasions upon which a certificate may be used during the six-month period of its validity.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations he is formally consulting on his review of the health benefits low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The review will look in detail at the way in which the NHS low income scheme is currently administered. The report recently published by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—NACAB—is therefore particularly relevant to the review. Officials will be discussing with NACAB the matters that it has raised and its recommendations. There are no plans to consult formally with organisations other than NACAB, but any representations that are received will be considered as the review is taken forward.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the value of each claim under the health benefits low income scheme is taken up with administrative charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not available.

During 1990-91, a total of 1,017,739 claims for help under the National Health Service low income scheme were received by the health benefits unit at Newcastle and 957,886 certificates of full or partial exemption were issued. The average cost of processing each claim was £7·65.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to publicise the existence of the health benefits low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) Regulations 1986 require opticians to display prominently a notice showing possible entitlement to vouchers under the low income scheme. Dentists are required by their terms of service set out in the National Health Service (General Dental Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1990 to display prominently a notice, indicating National Health Service charges which are payable under general dental services and entitlement to exemption from and remission of National Health Service charges.

In addition to these obligatory requirements, posters promoting the low income scheme are available for display at citizens advice bureaux, general practitioners' surgeries, pharmacies and in hospital out-patient departments. Claim forms and explanatory leaflets are also readily available from these and a number of other outlets, including welfare rights organisations and local offices of the Social Security Benefits Agency. The adequacy of existing forms and leaflets and their provision in languages other than English will be considered as part of the review of the National Health Service low income scheme.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each NHS trust the number of executive directors and chief executives receiving remuneration of over £40,000 in bands of £5,000.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The salaries of the chief executive and other executive directors of NHS trusts are a matter for the trust board. This information is not available centrally.

Occupational Therapy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ring-fence the occupational therapy funding being devolved to regions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Regional health authorities have been told that the moneys devolved to them for occupational therapy training are to be earmarked for that purpose until 1995-96.

Condoms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the risks to users of condoms made from natural rubber latex subject to radiation processing by RVNRL vulcanisation technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has no evidence of risks to users of condoms which have been vulcanised by an irradiation process. The process is understood to be used in the far east for some rubber latex products, mainly gloves. The major suppliers of condoms to the United Kingdom market employ other methods of vulcanisation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Electoral Registration

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are registered to vote in England and Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The electoral register which came into use on 16 February 1991 contained 38,478,502 people qualified to vote in local government elections in England and Wales and 38,509,382 people qualified to vote in parliamentary elections.

HIV

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the terms of the settlement of the litigation by those people who contracted HIV through infected blood products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I welcome the announcement today in court of the conclusion of this litigation and the acceptance of the terms of a settlement by the overwhelming majority of those in England and Wales who were pursuing action.

Under the terms of the settlement the payments to be made are:

	£ each
To each individual who is an infected haemophiliac:	
Infant (person under 18 years old)	21,500
Single adult	23,500
Married adult without dependent children	32,000
Haemophiliac with dependent children	60,500
Infected intimates of HIV infected haemophiliac:	
(a) adults or married infants	23,500
(b) unmarried infants	21,500
Category G plaintiffs (ie those litigants who have not sero-converted and/or been infected with HIV to their knowledge, but are at risk of doing so because they are the intimates of haemophiliacs who have sero-converted and/or been infected with HIV or developed AIDS).	2,000

The payment amounts are those put forward by the steering committee of solicitors representing the HIV-infected haemophiliacs and their counsel, and agreed by the Government.

The Macfarlane (Special Payments) (No. 2) Trust which was set up on 3 May has already begun to make the payments. A similar offer has been made to settle the separate litigation in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The payments will also be available to HIV infected haemophiliacs and infected intimates who had not joined litigation against any Department and who undertake not to do so in future.

While maintaining its denial of any negligence, the Government have provided £42 million to cover the cost of the payments. This is in addition to the £24 million made available in 1990 to provide a sum of £20,000 for each HIV-infected haemophiliac. We are also committed to ensuring that the original Macfarlane Trust set up in March 1988 with a Government grant of £10 million will continue to be able to give additional help where there is special need. These payments are in recognition of the very special and tragic circumstances of the haemophiliacs infected by HIV and provide a substantial measure of financial security for them and their families.

Furthermore, the Government remain committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure that appropriate services and treatments are available to the haemophiliacs, their partners and all others infected with HIV to try to alleviate and delay the effects of this infection. We continue to contribute to the research effort both here and worldwide, primarily to find a vaccine against HIV infection and a cure for the disease itself. We also continue to give substantial ring-fenced funds, amounting to almost £150 million in the current year, to the NHS and other organisations as the Government's contribution towards the cost of preventing the further spread of HIV and of providing appropriate diagnostic, treatment, care and support services.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *250*, if he will publish *(a)* the number of deliveries on which his figures were based and *(b)* the total number of women who delivered in England during the financial year 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimates quoted in the *Official Report* of 16 May were based on detailed returns

in respect of some 360,000 deliveries. In the same financial year—1989-90—there were 650,804 live births and 3,067 stillbirths in England, a total of 653,871 deliveries.

Special Diets

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many prescriptions for special diets were issued by general practitioners in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) in what circumstances general practitioners are able to issue national health service prescriptions for special diets; what restrictions there are on the foods available on prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not the function of the NHS to provide food products on prescription. We recognise that in some cases GPs may consider their active intervention is needed to help patients keep to medically recommended diets. GPs may therefore prescribe from a range of food products recommended by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

GPs are also free to prescribe other nutritional products, including vitamins and minerals, wherever necessary for their patients' treatment.

Products which the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances considers have no therapeutic use in the treatment of disease in the community are added to schedule 3A to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1974, so that they cannot be prescribed by GPs at NHS expense.

Although the Department's prescribing statistics include the estimated number of prescriptions for nutritional products, many of these products have several uses and it is therefore not possible to identify those which are used in "special diets". In addition, a large number of these products are prescribed so infrequently that the statistics are not a reliable measure of the number of prescriptions issued.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to challenge EC competence with regard to tobacco advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have not yet received the revised draft of the EC directive on tobacco advertising. When I do so I will give it careful consideration.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in the Privy Council Office in the past five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions;

(2) if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in the Privy Council Office and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year;

(3) if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of the Privy Council Office in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms;

(4) if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by the Privy Council Office, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The position of the Privy Council Office remains as indicated in answers given by my predecessor on 5 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *459*, 14 June 1990, *Official Report* column *299*, and 25 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *54*. The costs passed on to the Department in 1990-91 were £11,669 for electricity—representing approximately 203,000 units—and £2,352 for gas. No costs were incurred in respect of liquid or solid fuels. The remaining information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he has any plans to review the car parking facilities available for disabled people who *(a)* work within or *(b)* visit the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many parking spaces are available in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster the use of disabled Members of Parliament and where these are located; and if he will make a statement.

(3) if he has any plans to review the facilities available for car-parking in the Palace of Westminster for Members of Parliament who are disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There are 12 parking spaces in Star Chamber Court and three parking spaces in the inner courtyard of Norman Shaw North reserved for the use of vehicles driven by or used by photo-identity pass holders who are disabled. At present, eight hon. Members, four Members' secretaries and nine staff of the House have been authorised by the Serjeant at Arms to use these spaces on a first-come first-served basis. In addition, authority for their use is given from time to time to disabled visitors and to photo-identity pass holders suffering from a temporary period of incapacity. The arrangements for disabled parking in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster are kept under continuous review by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee. They were reviewed and confirmed by the Sub-Committee in January 1988 as a result of a survey carried out into the use of the spaces for the disabled in Star Chamber Court. In March 1990 the Sub-Committee gave approval for an additional parking bay for disabled drivers to be set aside outside Norman Shaw North bringing the total in that area to three and the Sub-Committee agreed in March this year that these three bays should be transferred to the inner courtyard of Norman Shaw North.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to review access for disabled people to the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 3 June 1991, (*Official Report*, column *16*). In addition to improvements recently agreed by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, it is proposed that a comprehensive study should be carried out to identify practicable and acceptable proposals for access by disabled and elderly people which marry the need for better facilities within the constraints imposed by the historic nature of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) when he next plans to meet representatives of the police to discuss the misuse of car parking spaces in the Palace of Westminster which are specifically designated for exclusive use by orange badge holders; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he proposes to take against hon. and right hon. Members who misuse car parking spaces in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster which are designated for the exclusive use of orange badge holders; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many complaints he has received regarding the alleged misuse or abuse of parking spaces in the Palace of Westminster designated for the use of disabled Members of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received no complaints of misuse or abuse of the spaces reserved for disabled people —they are not specifically set aside for orange badge holders. However, I have asked the authorities of the House to remind others who park their cars in Star Chamber Court not to use the spaces reserved for disabled people. I would welcome the co-operation of all right hon. and hon. Members in observing the recommendation of the Services Committee that the 12 marked spaces in Star Chamber Court and three marked spaces in the inner courtyard of Norman Shaw North should be for the exclusive use of disabled drivers.

Charles Stewart Parnell (Statue)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council, further to his answer of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *357*, what further discussions he has held about moving the statue of Charles Stewart Parnell to a more appropriate location on the Committee floor.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that the proposal will be on the agenda for the next meeting of the Advisory Committee on Works of Art in the House of Commons on 17 July.

WALES

Inward Investment

13. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest level of inward investment to Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The record levels of inward investment continue. Since 1 January Wales has secured 60 more projects, promising 7,196 new or safeguarded jobs and capital investment of over £342 million. From 21 June I shall be visiting the United States and Canada with Dr. Gwyn Jones, the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, to secure further investment for Wales.

Seven-year olds (Assessment)

14. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will report progress with the assessment of seven-year-olds in Welsh schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All primary schools in Wales have now concluded their assessments of seven-year-olds and reports will be made to parents by the end of the summer term.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider abolishing the assessment of seven-year-olds in schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Assessment forms an integral part of the national curriculum. The Government remain committed to the statutory assessment for seven, 11, 14 and 16-year-old pupils. The arrangements for testing seven-year-olds next year will be reviewed in light of the evaluation of this year's exercise currently being undertaken by the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

Welsh Language Board

15. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the Welsh Language Board; and if he will make a statement on the future of the board and its responsibilities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I last met the chairman of the Welsh Language Board on 23 May. Consultations on the proposals put forward by the board are currently taking place within Government. We will announce our response to these as soon as possible.

Agriculture (Incentive Schemes)

16. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the setting up of incentive schemes for young people setting up in agriculture.

Mr. David Hunt: Over the past year I have received a number of representations from farming unions and others about incentives for young people to enter the industry.

Welsh Language

17. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure that there will be an adequate supply of Welsh language teachers to meet the needs for the national curriculum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The requirements of the national curriculum including those in relation to Welsh, are being taken fully into account in setting the intakes to initial teacher training, in the revision of criteria for initial teacher training courses, devising recruitment policies and in the planning of the grants for education support and training programme.

Hospital Services

18. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met chairmen of health authorities in Wales to discuss the standard and range of hospital services.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met health authority chairmen on 31 January. I have met every health authority chairman since 1 January this year during my frequent visits to NHS establishments throughout Wales.

Family Farms

19. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to safeguard the future of family farms in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I recognise the importance of family farms within the structure of agriculture in Wales and their significance in social terms. I will continue to seek to ensure that those farms, along with others, are able to compete effectively and on equal terms within the single European market.

Area Health Authorities

20. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he intends to meet the chairmen of area health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A date for the next meeting between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and DHA chairmen has yet to be finalised.

Hospitals, Monmouth

21. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Monmouth to establish the effect of Government policy on local hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend and I have recently made a number of visits to the Monmouth area and I visited Nevill Hall hospital on 15 May 1991. I shall be making a further visit to health service establishments in Gwent in July.

Education

22. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met Welsh county councils to discuss education provision in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I meet with Welsh local authorities from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues including, of course, provision for the education service.

25. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take to improve further and higher education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The measures that we propose to take to improve further and higher education in Wales are contained in the White Papers "Education and Training for the 21st Century" and "Higher Education—A New Framework", published on 20 May. Our objective is to encourage young people to maximise their potential through increased participation in further and higher education and training. The reforms that we have announced will make it easier for this objective to be met.

26. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to implement the proposals relevant to his Department's function in the recent education White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The proposals in the White Papers will require new legislation. This will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Roads Programme

23. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has made any recent additions to the Welsh roads programme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 14 May.

Rail Services

24. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss rail services in the principality.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail to discuss a range of issues. They hope to meet again soon.

Forestry

27. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he evaluates environmental considerations in the development of forestry policy in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government's forestry policy fully recognises the environmental benefits that forests can provide if planned and managed in a sensitive way.

Since 1985 the Forestry Commissioners have had a statutory duty to endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between the needs of forestry and those of the environment in carrying out their functions. We have introduced a number of other measures to ensure that environmental factors are taken into account in forestry developments. For example, under the Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988, the Forestry Commissioners may require applicants for grant to draw up an environmental statement if they consider that new planting proposals are likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The Commission's woodland grant scheme is also designed to ensure that planting schemes meet high standards which are in sympathy with the landscape and meet relevant environmental considerations, as set out in guidelines published by the commission. Those policies are subject to regular monitoring and evaluation.

NHS Trusts

28. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the chairmen of district health authorities to discuss NHS trusts in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend and I discussed NHS trusts with the chairmen when we last met them on 31 January. A date for the next meeting has not yet been arranged.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications he has received to date from hospitals in Wales for national health service hospital trust status.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To date no application for trust status has been received from any unit in Wales, but an expression of interest has been lodged by Pembrokeshire DHA and a formal application is expected shortly.

Labour Statistics

29. **Mr. Edwards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the increase in unemployment in the Monmouth constituency since June 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: Since June 1990 the number of unemployed claimants in the Monmouth constituency has increased by 622.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount spent by his Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases; and if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1990-91, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm, the subject of the assignment and, if appropriate, the executive agency for whom the contract was carried out.

Mr. David Hunt: The total amount spent by my Department in the 1990-91 financial year on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases was £1,300,216. Details of management and computer consultancies awarded in that year were as follows:

Management consultancies awarded in the financial year 1990-91

Aspimrall & Co.:
Study of Industry and Environment

Price Waterhouse:
Study of "Source Wales"

Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte:
Review of Youth Service Management in Wales

Innovation Pilot Programme & Marketing:
Welsh Development Technology Marketing

Cambridge Scientific Ltd.:
Provision of Scientific services to NHS(D)

C. J. Webber:
West Glamorgan Ambulance Service Business Plan

Mid Glamorgan Health Authority:
Commercialisation of Pathology Service

Peter Stanley Associates:

Gwynedd Health Authority Surgery and Outpatients Review

P. A. Hutchinson & Owen, Thomas & Co.:
Pathology Business Planning

Finesse Corporate Functions:
Marketing of Neville Hall Conference Centre.

MMM Consultancy Group Ltd. & Owen Thomas & Co:
All Wales Supplies Review.

Peter Watkins:
Commercial Opportunities for the Ambulance Service in Wales.

Price Waterhouse:
All Wales Ambulance Review.

Peter Stanley Associates:
Gwynedd Health Authority Review of Surgical Survices.

Gwent Management Consultancy Services:
FHSD Forms Review to FHSAs.

Owen Thomas & Co:
Cost Improvement Programme Review

Roy Carr Hill:
Future Revenue Allocations in Wales (DHAs).

Hay MCL:
Performance Management in the NHS in Wales.

Touche Ross:
Business Plan: Breast Test Wales

Cardiff Business School:
Evaluation of better patient services

Babti & Dobbi:
Form of property appraisal audit

Alan Thomas:
Preparedness of DHAs for contracting

Duhig Berry:
PRINCE Project management overview

Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte:
I and IT Strategic Direction for the NHS in Wales: Technical Strategy and Implementation programme

Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte:
I and IT strategy for Gwynedd DHA

Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte:
Clwyd resource management project benefits study

Greenhalgh & Co. Ltd.:
Support to nursing systems project board

Metapraxis Ltd.:
Executive information provision

HACAS:
Study of costing of community hospitals in Powys and Clwyd

Griffiths Associates:
Configuration of computers

XPDNT Systems:
Configuration of automated project management systems

Gwyn Bevan:
GP Fundholders scheme—management of practice funds

Triad Special Systems:
Feasibility study into the viability of providing computer facilities for the Rent Officer Service in Wales

Aldbourne Associates:
Property Estates Project and HOW

Howard Humphries:
Road construction site management system

SIAS:
Welsh Highways Information System

BIS Applied Systems Ltd.:
Information systems strategy for Agriculture Department

Council Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of domestic residences in each of the property value bands of the proposed council tax in Wales, in the manner of the answer given to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), 8 May, *Official Report*, column *536*.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The following table gives the estimates used for the calculation of illustrative council tax bills for Wales.

Property value in relation to average capital value		*Upper property in value band* £	*Number of dwellings in Wales*
A:	under 50 per cent.	30,000	181,600
B:	50 to 65 per cent.	39,000	214,700
C:	65 to 85 per cent.	51,000	241,700
D:	85 to 110 per cent.	66,000	199,900
E:	110 to 150 per cent.	90,000	171,900
F:	150 to 200 per cent.	120,000	85,800
G:	over 200 per cent.	Over 120,000	63,400
Total all bands			1,159,000

Holyhead-London Transport Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will define the new responsibilities given to the Minister of State for Wales with regard to the development of rail links between Holyhead and London.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As part of my responsibility for co-ordination of initiatives for urban renewal in Holyhead I have taken a close interest in rail services.

The provision of services will nevertheless remain a matter for British Rail to determine.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings have so far been chaired by the Minister of State for Wales of the various organisations with a direct interest in improving the co-ordination of transport services from Holyhead to London; if he will state what organisations were represented at those meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provision of transport services is a matter for transport operators. I have had several meetings with interested parties including my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, local authorities and British Rail. On 3 June I chaired a meeting of organisations interested in all aspects of the regeneration of Holyhead at which British Rail was represented.

Dentists' Contracts

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists have left the national health service in Wales since the implementation of the new contract system.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Overall between 1 October 1990 and 30 April 1991 there was a net decrease of 10 dentists from FHSA dental lists in Wales, which represents 1·1 per cent. of the total.

Class Sizes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average class size for infants, primary and secondary schools in Wales in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information as at September of each year is given in the following table. The primary school information relates to the average size of registered classes in primary schools, including nursery classes. In the case of secondary schools, it is based on classes as taught.

Data on class size of nursery schools are not held centrally.

	Primary Schools	*Secondary Schools*
1989-90	24·8	18·9
1990-91	24·8	19·2

Nursery Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to increase nursery schooling in those parts of Wales where spending has been reduced; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to meet local education authorities in Wales to discuss an increase in the provision of nursery education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provision of education in school for children under the age of five is at the discretion of local education authorities. Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any plans to meet authorities to discuss nursery education.

School Fabric

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans to meet local education authorities in Wales to discuss the fabric of schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Expenditure plans submitted each year by local education authorities provide information about their education building plans, including refurbishment of schools, and these are subject to discussion with the Department.

Secure Places

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) by what date he intends to ensure there are enough secure places in Wales to end totally the accommodation of young people on remand in prison accommodation;

(2) if he will announce the steps he intends to take to provide secure places in Wales for those young people who need to be so placed;

(3) what assessment he has made of the number of secure places needed in Wales to cope with the number of young people who need to be so accommodated without making use of prison accommodation;

(4) what contribution he estimates can be made by community-based approaches and preventive work with young people and their families to cut down the number of secure accommodation places needed in Wales; and what plans he has to develop such policies.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Officials have completed a thorough review of secure care policy in Wales. I am presently considering their report, which will be issued for consultation next month.

Children's Homes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in detail the actions taken by his Department on the findings he published on 4 June relating to investigations undertaken into three children's homes in Wales, since the date of the inspections reported on.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Local management of the homes and the relevant local authorities were informed of the findings of the inspections immediately upon their conclusion. They were also given an opportunity to comment on draft versions of the reports prior to their publication. Subsequently, the social services inspectorate has written to directors of social services clarifying the conditions of use of the units and work is in hand on a revision of those conditions.

The findings of the inspections were taken into account in our review of secure care in Wales. Action on the specific recommendations made by the inspections is a matter for the respective local authorities.

Further inspections of the three units will take place in 1992.

Dentistry (Anaesthetic Services)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that people living in Mid Glamorgan have an acceptable level of provision of general anaesthetic services for dentistry.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The assessment of the needs of the resident population of a district, for general anaesthetic services for dentistry, is the responsibility of the district health authority and the family health service authority. In the hospital and community sector it is for the district health authority to contract with service providers to secure services sufficient to meet the assessed needs.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he proposes to make to the findings of the Poswillo report.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Consultation upon the Poswillo report is continuing. The outcome will be announced in due course.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the number of general dental practices in Mid Glamorgan which provide general anaesthetic services for tooth extraction; and what plans he has to improve this provision.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Three general dental practices in Mid Glamorgan provide general anaesthetic services. Information is not held centrally regarding the type of procedures for which these services are used.

Mid Glamorgan family health service authority, in conjuction with the district health authority, has the responsibility for planning and securing appropriate levels of dental services for its resident population.

Job Creation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of each company involved in job creation projects in Wales during 1990 together with the number of jobs created in each case.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* Information relating to all job creation projects is not held centrally. In the context of inward investment, Wales secured 142 projects from overseas and the rest of the United Kingdom during 1990, promising nearly 16,000 new and safeguarded jobs and a capital investment of almost £640 million.

A list of the companies concerned, excluding those which have requested confidentiality, are shown in the table. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, individual details of investment and jobs are not disclosed.

PROJECTS SECURED 1990
NORTH AMERICA
Company
AMG Resources
Activeair
Agrisence BCS
Alberto Culver UK Ltd.
Alcoa Extrusions (UK) Ltd.
Borg Warner Automotive
Britcair Ltd.
Britcair/Merck
CBS
Campbell Chilled Foods
Dexter Packaging
Dow Chemical
Dow Corning
Dow Corning
Elac/Harmon
Electro Craft
Electrocatalytic Ltd.
Eriez Magnetics
Eurofoil Ltd.
Hoover
Inco (Europe) Ltd.
J. R. Freeman & Sons
Kimberly Clark
Kimberly Clark
Lion Laboratories MPD Inc.
Miles Labs
Optical Fibres
Owens Corning Fibreglass
Rubery Owen-Rockwell
Silent Channel Products
Strategic Systems Industries
Superjet Services
TRW Cam Gears
Viskase
Westminster Health Care

PROJECTS SECURED 1990
UNITED KINGDOM
Company
Abbey National Plc
Abbey National Plc
Allen Ind
Allied Dunbar
Avana Bakeries
BBC
Bantex (Flint) Ltd.
Benison Nursery Care
British Aerospace Ent Ltd.
British Airways
British Coal Liquification
British Steel
British Telecom
Brown & Jackson
Caring Production Ltd.
Chartered Trust Comp. Centre
Chartered Trust Ltd.
Chivers Book Sales Ltd.
Collective Leisure Ltd.
Conran Roache
Cornelius Electronics
Deeside Colour Direct
Domglade
Dunn & Bradstreet
Elite Optics
Envelopes Direct
Flexigraphics
Guiness Bros Plc (Luxi)
Holtron
Inland Revenue (Swansea)
Inland Revenue (Wrexham)
Jan Roberts Ltd.
K. D. Products Ltd.
Kilroe Pipeline Services Ltd.
Lloyds Bank
Lloyds Bank (St. Mellons)
Lucas CBS
Memory Lane Cakes
Oakdale Batteries Ltd.
Penn Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Peters Savory Products
Qualtex Industries Ltd.
Rygor Holdings
Scottish Amicable
Sedgewick (UK) Ltd.
Solaglass
Spirolit UK Ltd.
Star Products
Swift Catering
Techlok Ltd.
Travers Morgan Consulting Gp
Ultimate Design
Vanessa Ltd.
Victoria Cabinets Co.
W. A. Turner
Willis Wrightson
Windsor Die Castings Ltd.
Wirral Print Finishers
Wrexham Mineral Cables
JAPAN/FAR EAST
Gooding Sanken
Kintetsu Express
Matsushita Electric (UK) Ltd.
Matsushita Electric (UK) Ltd.
Meiki (UK) Ltd.
Orion Electric (UK) Ltd.
Panasonic
Sekisui
Sharp Manufacturing
Takiron
Yuasa Battery (UK) Ltd.

AFRICA/ASIA/ROW
Company
Boral Ltd.
European Fine Blanking
Prestar/Camford

EUROPE
Autophon (UK) Ltd.
Avangard
Belscan Ltd.
Castle Cement
Coopers Filters
Cray Valley Products
DAS Legal
Ensinger Ltd.
Ferrero Manufacturing Ltd.
Finnbhus AB/Andrew Scott Ltd.
Fram Europe Ltd.
Golden Ltd.
Interceram Manufacturing Ltd.
Isringhausen (GB) Ltd.
Kronospan
Label Image Ltd.
Lansing Linde

Smurfit Marketing By Design
Solaglas
Spring Industries Ltd.
Spring Industries Ltd.
Todo (UK) Ltd.
Triumph International (UK) Ltd.
Stilexo Ind. (UK) Ltd.
Valeo Climate Control Ltd.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Farms

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many owners of fish farms in England and Wales have applied to the EC for a subsidy to develop aquaculture since 1987; and how many have been successful in their application.

Mr. Curry: Council regulation 4028/86, provides for Community measures to improve and adapt structures in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and came into effect from 1 January 1987. Since then, there have been 11 applications for EC aquaculture aid in England and Wales, of which eight have been successful. The details are shown in the table.

Year of application	*England*		*Wales*	
	Applications	*Successful applications*	*Applications*	*Successful applications*
1987	2	2	1	1
1988	—	—	1	—
1989	3	3	1	—
1990	2	2	1	—

Garden Festivals

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the Institute of Horticulture regarding garden festivals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have not so far received any representations on garden festivals from this source.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes to discuss the development of the garden festivals with the Institute of Horticulture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: At present I have no plans to do so.

Institute of Horticulture

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes to meet the Institute of Horticulture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 15 May 1991, *Official Report*, column *189*.

Video Cameras (New Forest)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter sent to Forestry Commission keepers regarding the use of video cameras in the New Forest.

Mr. Curry: A copy of the letter, dated 15 December 1989, is being placed in the Library.

Scotch Whisky (Exports)

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of British exports of Scotch whisky in each of the past five years, in cash terms and as a percentage of total exports.

Mr. Curry: The figures for exports for Scotch whisky, which include a small amount of Northern Irish whiskey, are as follows:

	Value of exports of Scotch whisky	
	£ million	*as a percentage of all visible exports*
1986	1,071	1·5
1987	1,136	1·4
1988	1,289	1·6
1989	1,470	1·6
1990	1,712	1·6

Drift Nets

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will use his powers under the Sea Fisheries Conservation Act 1967 to ban the use of drift nets in United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Curry: The European Community is currently preparing a regulation which will prevent the use of large-scale indiscriminate drift netting in not only United Kingdom waters but the waters of all other member states and by EC vessels on the high seas. We are working so that this can be agreed soon.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer of 4 December 1990, *Official Report*, column 172, if he will make a further statement on compensation for nuclear test veteran, John Hall.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Invalidity Pensions

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total annual pension paid to *(a)* a private and *(b)* a sergeant, with five years' service, invalided out of the services in 1990 with (i) 30 per cent. disability, (ii) 60 per cent. disability and (iii) 100 per cent. disability, respectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table shows the current rates of pension paid by the Ministry of Defence and by the Department of Social Security.

(a) Service attributable pension paid by the Ministry of Defence in respect of invaliding on 1 April 1990.

Percentage disability	*Private annual pension* £	*Sergeant annual pension* £
30	1,530·42	2,627·22
60	2,073·83	4,066·70
100	2,992·08	6,119·46

(b) War disability pension paid by the Department of Social Security

Percentage disability	*Private weekly pension* £	*or Sergeant annual equivalent* £
30	25·47	1,328·00
60	50·94	2,656·00
100	84·90	4,426·69

In addition, there is a range of supplementary allowances which may be payable under the war pension scheme, depending on the circumstances of the individual case—e.g. unemployability supplement or allowance for lowered standard of occupation, constant attendance allowance, mobility supplement, age allowance, clothing allowance.

Parachute Units

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) under what headings additional costs arise for a Territorial Army parachute unit compared with a comparable non-parachute unit;

(2) what savings would be made by assigning a Territorial Army parachute unit to a non-parachute role as a Territorial Army unit of comparable size.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend.

Interpreters

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many qualified interpreters in *(a)* Arabic and *(b)* Turkish are currently serving in (i) the armed forces and (ii) the reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 45 qualified interpreters in Arabic and seven in Turkish currently serving in the regular forces. We do not hold central records of the number of qualified interpreters in the reserve forces, but they are know to number at least 27 in Arabic and one in Turkish.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many interpreters in *(a)* Arabic and *(b)* Turkish are currently serving with the British forces in (i) south-eastern Turkey and (ii) northern Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Eleven Arabic-speaking members of the armed forces are currently deployed to south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq on operation Haven. Six are trained to linguist or interpreter standard and two also have Turkish language qualifications. The other five are students on the services' long Arabic language course. They are deployed within Turkey and northern Iraq as required. Local interpreters are employed as necessary.

Crown Prosecutions (Army) Act

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the delay in providing copies of the Batus range orders, the memorandum of understanding between the British and Canadian Governments and details of the exercise briefing orders, as they related to the digging of trenches in the impact area of a live firing range, to the representatives of Guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey, in pursuit of their claim of negligence under the Crown Prosecutions (Army) Act 1987; and if he will make the relevant documents available forthwith.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A copy of the Batus range standing orders and of the exchange of notes on the training of United Kingdom armed forces in Canada (there is no memorandum of understanding) have now been sent to the solicitors representing Guardsmen Hicks, Ray and Povey. No other documents have been requested.

"Options for Change"

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future role of the Royal Hampshire Regiment in his consideration and determination of "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 4 June at columns 143-44.

Injured Grenadiers

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what resettlement arrangements were made upon the medical discharge of the three injured Grenadiers, Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Lance corporal Ray is still in the Army and has embarked upon the resettlement process. Guardsman Povey is also still in the Army but has yet to start resettlement.

Guardsman Hicks has left the Army. He spent a total of 235 days, divided into two periods, at the defence services medical rehabilitation unit RAF Headley Court, where he passed his driving test. He has received guidance from the MOD's resettlement advice officer and the employment services disablement resettlement officer. He was assessed at an employment resettlement centre last year and subsequently underwent a resettlement training course at Henswell, near Lincoln. After discharge from the services, any further training is the responsibility of the disablement resettlement officer of the employment services, but of course his regimental association will continue to take an active interest in his after care.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he personally has read the findings of the board of inquiry into the Army exercise accident involving guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey on 7 July 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been briefed on the content of the board of inquiry's report.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he will make available documents key to the cases of Grenadier guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey in formulating their cases under the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987, and in particular the Range Orders, the full findings of the subsequent board of inquiry and the precise safety briefings given to men prior to embarking on the training exercise of 7 July 1989;

(2) why documents key to Grenadier guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey in pursuing their cases of negligence under the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987 have not yet been made available to them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The solicitors acting for Guardsmen Hicks, Ray and Povey already have a summary of the findings of the board of inquiry report. A copy of the exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and Canadian Governments regarding the training of United Kingdom forces in Canada and of the Batus range standing orders have now been sent to them. No information on the briefing provided for the training exercise is held by the Ministry of Defence but safety precautions, including the procedures for reporting and disposing of unexploded ammunition are covered in the range standing orders.

Mr. John Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many cases have been brought under the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act since it came into force in 1987; and in how many of those cases a claim of negligence was upheld.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987 came into force, and as at 20 May 1991, a total of 1,619 claims have been received. Of these, 235 have been accepted and settled. 331 have either not been pursued further by the claimant or have not been accepted and 1,053 are currently under investigation.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what precise steps were taken to ensure the effective execution of safety procedures by the 1 Battalion Grenadier Guards on the Batus training area in Canada on 7 July 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Comprehensive range safety procedures are laid down in the range standing orders, which must be followed by all units.

The steps to be taken to ensure that these procedures are known to all Batus personnel are laid down in the orders. It is the responsibility of commanders at all levels to ensure that the safety procedures are rigorously obeyed.

The board of inquiry convened to investigate this incident did not identify any contravention of any order, procedure or drill.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the details, including assumed discount rate and time of money flows, behind the actuarial assessment of the £150,000 present value equivalent award which he gave to the House in the Adjournment debate on 3 June, *Official Report*, column 136.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In arriving at the estimated present value equivalent to the MNOD and DSS benefits awarded, future pension payments (which are linked to the retail price index) payable from discharge until death were discounted at a rate of just over 4 per cent. per annum, this being the assumed rate of investment return available in excess of future price increases, based on the real return available in December 1990 on idex linked British Government securities.

The present equivalent award was estimated at about £143,000 assuming the death occurs at age 60, or £161,000 assuming death at age 75.

Army Manpower

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what change in the roles and commitments of the British Army led to his recently announced manpower cuts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) on 4 June at column 143.

Housing, Wales

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total number of Ministry of Defence housing units to be found on *(a)* Royal Air Force and *(b)* Army bases in Wales in each of the years (i) 1969, (ii) 1979 and (iii) 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total number of Army and RAF married quarters and civilian houses owned by the Ministry of Defence in Wales on 31 March 1989 was as follows:

	1979	*1989*
RAF	2,365	2,014
Army	674	516

Statistics do not differentiate between houses on or off base. Records are not available for 1969.

Welsh Military Bases

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of all military bases currently within Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 16 major defence establishments in Wales. These are shown with their function in the table. In addition there are many minor facilities located throughout the Principality.

Establishment	*Main function*
Brecon	HQ Wales and NCO tactical wing
Castlemartin	Armoured corps training area
Sennybridge	Principal Army training area
Bridgend	Army vehicle workshop
RNAD Trecwn/ Milford Haven	Royal naval armament depot

Establishment	*Main function*
AWE Llanishen	RAF tactical weapons training
RAF St. Athan	Aircraft maintenance and technical training centre
RAF Sealand	Specialist repair centre for avionics
RAF Valley	Advanced flying training
RAF Caerwent	United States Army ammunition storage facility
RAE Aberporth	Royal Aircraft Establishment
MSD Pembroke dock	Marine and salvage depot
Llangennech	Forms and publications depot
P and EE Pendine	Proof and experimental establishment
RAE Llanbedr	Royal Aircraft Establishment

The Gulf

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on impediment by the Spanish Government of the British contribution to the war effort in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any such impediment by the Spanish Government. Spain generously provided a range of practical assistance, including air transport, in support of British forces.

Operation Granby

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel involved during the period of Operation Granby were *(a)* members of the volunteer forces, either serving in the Gulf or in United Kingdom assisting with the effort on releasing regular personnel or *(b)* personnel serving on SSVCs or S type engagements with the regular forces in the Gulf or in United Kingdom assisting with the effort or releasing regular personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* A total of 877 members of the volunteer reserves were called out for service during Operation Granby. Nearly 500 other personnel from the Territorial Army served on short service voluntary commissions or special type S short-term attachments with the regular Army last year, many in support of Operation Granby, and 6 Royal Marines Reservists undertook similar attachments with the Royal Marines. In addition, considerable assistance was provided by volunteer reservists on an informal basis at local level.

Helicopters

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many helicopters which served in the Gulf were painted in desert colours; how many such helicopters have been re-painted in ordinary camouflage; how many helicopters will be painted in desert colours for the fly-past in June; what is the cost of painting desert colours on the helicopters which will take part in the fly-past; and how many helicopters painted in desert colours will be re-painted in ordinary camouflage after the fly-past.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* All British helicopters deployed to the Gulf were painted in desert camouflage. About half have already had, or will shortly have, this paint removed. The remainder will be repainted in normal camouflage colours as they undergo scheduled overhauls. No helicopters will be repainted specifically for the fly-past, although the desert colours of some of those taking part may need to be touched up for anti-corrosion purposes. The cost of this will be minimal.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 11 June 1991

TRANSPORT

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage reductions of carbon dioxide emissions are planned for each year between the present time and 2005.

Mr. Chope: We have not set year-by-year targets.

Airline Deregulation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to initiate a pan-European airline deregulation campaign as a prerequisite to an open skies environment between Europe and the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The United Kingdom Government have been and continue to be in the forefront of the pursuit of aviation liberalisation in Europe, both multilaterally in the EC and bilaterally. Wherever possible, we have been taking steps to pursue similar liberalisation elsewhere in the world. Discussions on liberalisation with the United States are at an early stage. Our aim will be to remove obstacles to fair competition, which hinder our airlines at present, and to remove unnecessary regulation.

Driving Licence Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department is examining the possibility of disclosing copies of photographs obtained on driver licences to the police; whether powers in section 15(1) of the Road Vehicle (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 would allow for this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency —DVLA—is currently collating and analysing responses to the consultation document on the proposal to include photographs on driving licences. The police are allowed access to the driver licensing records for law enforcement purposes under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1984. The DVLA would, as necessary, seek advice on disclosure of photographs from the Data Protection Registrar. Regulation 15 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 specifically covers release of information from the vehicle register. I will make a further statement shortly.

Taxi Licences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) of 2 May, *Official Report*, column *306*, whether he has issued advice to local authorities on how to determine what offences make a person not a fit and proper person to hold a taxi licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Local authorities have broad discretion over all the main areas of taxi licensing and they decide, based on the information at their disposal, whether to issue a taxi licence. No guidance has been issued.

A33

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the upgrading of the Chilworth to Otterbourne section of the A33 to motorway standard to be completed and opened to the public; and how he intends to control the consequential traffic congestion on the unreconstructed section of the A33 between Bar End, Winchester and Otterbourne.

Mr. Chope: Upgrading of the Compton (Otterbourne) to Bassett (Chilworth) section of the A33 to motorway standard is currently due to be completed and open to the public later this year. We have no plans to carry out any major works on the existing A33 between Winchester and Compton (Otterbourne) which will be superseded by the planned Bar End—Compton section of the M3. Advance works for this scheme are already under way. The main construction is due to start next year.

Rail Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will issue a general directive to the British Railways Board, under section 27 of the Transport Act 1962, to require it to take into account the national interest of Wales in exercising its functions relating to passenger transport, relating to the need for adequate and convenient InterCity services between Cardiff and Holyhead;

(2) if he will now use powers under section 3 of the Railways Act 1974 to give directions to the board of British Rail to continue to provide InterCity railway service through trains six times a day each way between Holyhead and London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. The Government's policy is that InterCity should take its decisions on a normal commercial basis. Government grants are available for services provided by Regional Railways.

A1-A1068 (Junction)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken of the costs and benefits of a junction providing direct access from the A1 to the A1068.

Mr. Chope: No economic appraisal has been undertaken of a direct access from trunk road A1 Alnwick bypass to the A1068.

Roads (Safety Fencing)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many dual carriageways and motorways have Bridon wire fencing installed along the central section.

Mr. Chope: In England, wire rope safety fencing has been provided on dual carriageway central reserves at three locations. A further five such installations are in progress.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales are responsible for highway matters in Scotland and Wales.

Red Routes

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist to extend red routes to other urban areas.

Mr. Chope: It will be for local authorities outside London to decide whether to introduce priority red routes in their areas using their existing powers, in co-operation with the police and seeking the authorisations of the priority red route signs and markings from the Secretary of State.

Road Tankers (Safety)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to strengthen road tankers to reduce risk of spillage and fire in case of accident.

Mr. Chope: The Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 are the subject of current review and consultation by the Health and Safety Executive. Updated regulations covering improved requirements for petrol tankers and tankers carrying other flammable liquids are expected to be published at the end of this year, supported by approved codes of practice.

A1 (Resurfacing)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times the A1 south of Scremerston has been resurfaced in the course of the road works carried out there over the last year; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The road improvement south of Scremerston widened the existing carriageway by 2m to bring the section of the A1 up to current design standards for a single carriageway road. Work commenced in September last year and was substantially completed in December. The contractor returned to the site in May to replace an area of surfacing that did not comply with the specification.

West Midlands (Rail Services)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the quality of rail services between London Euston and the west midlands.

Mr. Freeman: Quality of inter-city services is a commercial matter for British Rail. I am sure that it will want to improve performance on this route in order to compete successfully with other forms of transport.

A38

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the total number of representations his Department have received in response to the A38 trunk road improvement between Liskeard and Bodmin, indicating *(a)* the numbers favouring the options to the north and south of Dobwalls, respectively, *(b)* the numbers favouring the options to the north and south of the A390, respectively and *(c)* the number who would have preferred a Glynn valley option.

Mr. Chope: More than 500 completed questionnaires were received in response to the recent public consultation on the proposed improvement of the A38, Liskeard to Bodmin. The questionnaires are still being evaluated. We will make a full statement on the results of the public consultation when the preferred route is announced towards the end of the year.

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when and for what reasons the decision was taken not to include an upgrading of the A38 on a new line of route through the Glynn valley as an option as part of the A38 trunk road improvement between Bodmin and Liskeard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The decision not to include a new route through the Glynn valley as one of the options for the improvement of the A38, Liskeard to Bodmin, was taken at an early stage in the development of the scheme.

Forecasts of future traffic indicate that a dual carriageway road will be necessary. The poor vertical and horizontal alignment of the existing road through the valley precludes its use as half of a dual carriageway system. It would be necessary to build a completely new road.

The topography of the valley is such that building a new dual carriageway through it would be extremely difficult. Major engineering works, including substantial earthworks and structures, would have a very damaging impact on the environment of the valley, which is the central feature of the Mid-Fowey special area of great landscape value and a Cornwall nature conservation site.

Railway Construction

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for all OECD countries, the number of miles of new publicly funded, main line railway track constructed, for each of the last 10 years, and the number of miles of such track *(a)* actually under construction and *(b)* planned.

Mr. Freeman: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the application for a heavy goods vehicle licence from Mr. George West, ref. VDL/H/CC, was received by the DVLA at Swansea; when the licence is going to be issued; and if he will make a statement explaining the reasons for the delay in issuing this licence.

Mr. Chope: I regret that, without Mr. West's date of birth, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency—DVLA—officials are unable to investigate Mr. West's case. The agency has more than 40 million driver records, and these are held under unique numbers made up from the driver's name and date of birth. The agency deals with up to 40,000 driving licence applications each day.

I have written to the hon. Member requesting the information which DVLA will need to identify Mr. West's application; and I will write to him again when my inquiries are complete.

Seamen

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the results of the studies into the future supply and demand for United Kingdom seamen and into the supply and demand for United Kingdom merchant ships in time of war.

Mr. McLoughlin: Summaries of both reports have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Trinity House Transmitter, Amble

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for a non-statutory public inquiry into the proposal of Trinity House to erect a Loran C transmitter at Amble, Northumberland.

Mr. McLoughlin: The arrangement of a non-statutory public inquiry into this proposal would be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Since no Crown development is involved in the proposal, the question of such an inquiry under Department of Environment circular 18/22 does not arise.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has been notified as the developing department of the strong objections of the local planning authority to the proposal by Trinity House to erect a 700ft mast at Amble, Northumberland; and whether he will apply the procedures set out in circular 18/84 in response to these objections so as to enable a public local inquiry to take place.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* The Department of Transport is aware of the objections of the local planning authority to the proposal by Trinity House to erect a mast near Amble in Northumberland. The Department is not however the developing Department; indeed no Crown development is involved in the proposal. Accordingly the question of using procedures under Department of the Environment circular 18/84 does not arise.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I has meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

Tanks

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Prime Minister what response he has made to the letter of 4 June from Sanderson Kayser Ltd. on the implications of the Chieftain main battle tank replacement contract.

The Prime Minister: A reply will be sent to the company shortly.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nuclear Structure Facility, Daresbury

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many Nobel prize winners wrote to him to ask for the retention of the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury; and what was the nature of his response.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received one letter from a Nobel prize winner who expressed the hope that the Science and Engineering Research Council's nuclear structure facility at Daresbury could be kept open. The reply was to the effect such decisions were for the SERC to make, based on its judgments of scientific priority.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish his Department's evaluation of the quality of the work done at the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Evaluation of the scientific quality of research carried out under the aegis of the research councils is a matter for them and the scientific community to assess. The Department does not seek to make its own judgments in these matters.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations were made to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon, in the course of his recent visit to Daresbury laboratory about the desirability of a peer review of the quality of work undertaken at the nuclear structure facility; and what was his response.

Mr. Alan Howarth: During my visit to Daresbury laboratory with my hon. Friend on 22 February I met a number of the staff and their representatives who put to me their concern about SERC's planned closure of the nuclear structure facility. Several expressed the view that such a decision should be subject to further peer review. I responded by emphasising that decisions on the management of SERC's programme must be for the council to judge, and by referring to the further study to assess the importance of the area of nuclear structure science announced by SERC on 7 February.

National Curriculum

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the expenditure to date incurred on the production and administration of the national curriculum, broken down between that incurred on (i) working groups, (ii) publication, (iii) publicity, (iv) School Examinations and Assessment Council meetings, (v) in-service training, (vi) monitoring and (vii) other.

Mr. Eggar: Government expenditure on the national curriculum in the 1989-90 financial year was some £20·6 million; and in 1990-91 it was £24·8 million (provisional). These figures include grant-in-aid to the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council. Planned expenditure for 1991-92 is some £34·9 million.

The implementation of the national curriculum has also been supported by the Government via specific grants to

local education authorities. Eligible expenditure includes in-service training, the employment of advisory teachers, support for non-teaching support staff, and the provision of extra books, materials and equipment. In 1989-90 these grants totalled some £100 million; in 1990-91, they were some £120 million; and in 1991-92 they will support LEA expenditure of around £170 million.

It is not possible to break down this expenditure in the way requested by the hon. Member. The table shows direct expenditure by the Department:

(i) *Working Groups*
In the financial years 1987-88 to 1990-91—£710,000.
Planned expenditure in 1991-92—£127,000.

(ii) *Publication*
National curriculum subject orders—£5,500,000.
NC assessment statutory documents and speeches—£148,000.

(iii) *Publicity*
Leaflets for parents and teachers—£665,000.

(vi) *Monitoring*
Monitoring is being carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate as part of their normal duties.

Local Authority Service Provision

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for which areas of local authority service provision for which he is responsible payments are required to be made to individuals who are not employees *(a)* in the form of a grant or one-off payment and *(b)* on receipt of paid invoices.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* Local education authorities may make payments to a variety of individuals who are not their employees. Examples may include mandatory and discretionary awards to students; assistance to school children and students for clothing, footwear, school journeys or towards tuition fees; allowances to councillors or governors; and payments to suppliers of goods and services. Information on the full range of such payments, or on whether they take the form of grants or of reimbursement of paid invoices, is not collected centrally.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number and type of job creation opportunities set up by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. in South Yorkshire since 1984.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since 1984, in the Yorkshire region as a whole British Coal Enterprise Ltd.—BCE—has helped to create 5,711 new job opportunities by funding the start-up or expansion of new businesses, and a further 1,298 new job opportunities through the funding of managed workspace. BCE has also helped 4,695 ex-British Coal employees to find alternative employment, through the job and career change scheme. The total to 31 March 1991 is therefore 11,704. Separate figures for South Yorkshire are not published.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many of the stockbrokers eligible for selling commissions in respect of electricity privatisation in England and Wales he proposes *(a)* to pay and *(b)* not to pay, before the end of June, all or most of the fees due.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The relevant payments in respect of the regional electricity companies share offers are under way: I would expect the remainder to be substantially completed during the month. Those in respect of the generating companies share offers should be in train shortly thereafter.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects Touche Ross to complete its audit in relation to the sale of shares in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry of England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have recently received Touche Ross's audit report in relation to the selling commissions due to brokers in respect of the regional electricity companies share offers, on the basis of which the relevant payments are now being made to brokers; that in relation to the generating companies share offers is expected shortly. As regard the firm's work on fraud audit, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 10 June at columns *408-9*.

Fossil-Fuel Power Stations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what uses are made of the ash created in the burning of coal in fossil-fuel power stations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Up to 50 per cent.—around 7 million tonnes—of the ash from coal-fired power stations is used for commercial purposes in a number of constructional applications and building products, for example, as structural fill material in road construction projects, in the manufacture of aerated building blocks and lightweight aggregates, and concrete applications.

Fuel Rationing Coupons

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current cost of storing motor fuel rationing coupons.

Mr. Moynihan: Due to an advance in printing techniques, such storage is no longer necessary. We have now moved to a print on demand scheme, which will involve no expenditure after this financial year, thus saving at least £200,000 per annum.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Tax Allowance

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the additional revenue in a full year that would result from abolishing the £3,295 annual tax allowance for children; and by how much child benefit could be raised if the additional revenue were wholly used for that purpose.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The additional revenue produced by abolishing the personal tax allowance for all children

would be about £60 million in a full year for the United Kingdom. This sum would allow child benefit to go up by about 10p a week for each eligible child.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on margins charged by banks over minimum lending rate; and what proposals he has for regulating these margins.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have received a number of representations on this issue. My officials, together with the Bank of England, are looking at the concerns that have been raised. We will consider what—if any—action is necessary when we have established the facts.

Mortgages

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on *(a)* the total number of mortgages for which monthly repayments are reviewed annually and *(b)* the proportion of mortgages subject to annual review which are reviewed in each month.

Mr. Maples: Only partial information is available. We do not hold information on the total number of mortgages for which payments are adjusted annually, but it is estimated that over 40 per cent. of building society mortgages fall into this category. No information is available on the proportion of annual review mortgages that are reviewed in each month.

Income Tax Assessments

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many assessments for personal income tax made by the Inland Revenue were appealed against in each year since 1987.

Mr. Maude: The number of appeals against schedule D. capital gains and taxed income assessments since 1987 are as follows. In many cases, the appeal was against an estimated assessment raised in the absence of the taxpayer's return.

	Million
1987-88	2·1
1988-89	2·9
1989-90	3·1
1990-91	3·2

The relevant statistics for schedule E assessments are not available on the computerised PAYE system.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many assessments for personal income-tax made by the Inland Revenue in each year since 1988 were appealed against *(a)* on the initial assessment, *(b)* on the second assessment, *(c)* on the third assessment and *(d)* on further assessments.

Mr. Maude: Figures for appeals are not recorded in this form.

Inland Revenue (Efficiency)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what performance indicators are used by the Inland Revenue to monitor the service's efficiency and effectiveness *(a)* in terms of assessment of tax revenue due and *(b)* in terms of collection.

Mr. Maude: A wide range of indicators is used to plan, manage and report the Inland Revenue's work. Key figures are published each year in the Board of Inland Revenue's plans and annual report, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. For example, the report for the year ending 31 March 1990—Cm. 1321—showed that 98·8 per cent. of the main assessments for schedule D income tax were issued on time in 1989-90, and that the proportion of assessment taxes which had been collected was the highest for five years.

Pensioners (Tax)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing for 1991-92 the numbers of pensioners who *(a)* pay no income tax, *(b)* pay income tax at the basic rate only and *(c)* pay income tax at the highest rate.

Mr. Maude: The latest estimates are that about 7·3 million individuals aged over 65 will pay no income tax, 2·6 million will pay income tax at the basic rate only and 150,000 will pay at the higher rate.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of local government expenditure in Worthing is likely to be financed from community charge, uniform business rate and central government, respectively in 1991-92; and what were the figures in 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo: Worthing borough council are expecting to raise £22·55 million in community charges in respect of 1990-91. Together with income of £23·6 million from the non-domestic rates pool, and £7·4 million revenue support grant, after safety net adjustment, this money will help finance £322·1 million net revenue expenditure by West Sussex county council, and £9 million net revenue expenditure by Worthing borough council.

For 1991-92 Worthing borough council are expecting to raise £25·8 million in community charges in respect of that year. Together with £26·3 million from the non-domestic rates pool, and £8·4 million revenue support grant, this will help finance £354·8 million budgeted net revenue expenditure by West Sussex county council in 1991-92, and £10 million budgeted net revenue expenditure by Worthing borough council in 1991-92.

It is not possible to say what proportion of local government expenditure in Worthing is financed by any one of these sources.

Household Incomes

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), *Official Report*, 27 June 1990, column *259*, to 1991-92 showing, in addition, the total gainers and losers and a more detailed breakdown of net household income, equivalised and unequivalised, at the top end of the income range.

Mr. Key: Information placed in the Library on 15 February and 27 June 1990 showed the distributional impact of the community charge on a basis directly

comparable with domestic rates. Subsequent changes in local government spending and the level of central support mean that an equivalent basis of comparison is not available for 1991-92. Because of the small sample size, a more detailed breakdown of net household income is not possible.

Buildings Regulations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his Department's proposals for the revision of part M of the Building Regulations 1985 to be introduced.

Mr. Yeo: I expect to lay before Parliament in the autumn of this year revised Building Regulations, incorporating changes to the requirements of part M. The revised approved document which gives practical guidance on how the requirements of the regulations can be met will be published at the same time. They will come into force subject to parliamentary approval in the summer of 1992.

Wild Birds

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the caging of wild birds for use as decoys is permitted under the European Birds directives 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The directive prohibits the hunting, capturing or killing of wild birds where the methods used would result in the large-scale or non-selective capture or killing of birds, or would cause the local disappearance of a species. The directive prohibits live birds which are blind or mutilated from being used as decoys.

Convention Centres

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of grants and other assistance given to *(a)* the Birmingham international conference and exhibition centre and *(b)* the Bournemouth international centre from public funds in the United Kingdom and from the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Birmingham international convention centre has received £49·75 million grant from the European regional development fund.

The national exhibition centre received a central Government grant of £1·5 million at the outset and a further £12·3 million ERDF grant in 1988 to fund the newest halls.

The Bournemouth international centre has received no specific grant from central Government or the ERDF.

My Department does not collect information on local authority support for such projects.

Listed Buildings

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used to designate a listed building in each category.

Sir George Young: There are three categories of listed building in England and they are classified in three grades to show their relative importance as follows:

Grade I —Buildings of exceptional interest.
Grade II*—Particularly important buildings of more than special interest.
Grade II —Buildings of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.

Principles of selection and grading are more fully explained in appendix 1 to my Department's circular 8/87 "Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas—Policy and Procedures".

Local Government Structure

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce full-time councillors in his proposals for the structure of local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Government will be publishing shortly a separate conslutation document on the internal management arrangements of local authorities; I cannot pre-empt its contents.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of *(a)* the lost revenue, *(b)* the cost of capital allowances, and *(c)* *(a)* and *(b)* within enterprise zones for the latest workable year.

Mr. Portillo: The latest available figures are:
rate revenue forgone in enterprise zones in the United Kingdom—£92 million in 1989-90.
capital allowances in enterprise zones in Great Britain—no figures are available for Northern Ireland—£150 million in 1988-89.

Environmental Protection Act

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment since what date the guidance notes to the implementation of the Environmental Protection Act have been out of print; and when he expects new ones to be printed.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 6,000 copies of the "Practical Guide to Integrated Pollution Control" were issued on 28 February 1991. These were sent free of charge to operators of processers controlled under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and to all other interested bodies on request. However, demand for the guide so far exceeded our expectations that this initial supply was exhausted by mid-April. A reprint of a further 6,000 was ordered immediately and copies may now be obtained from the Department on request. The guide was out of print for less than three weeks.

Tradeable Permits

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the results of research by London Economics Ltd. into the utility of tradeable permits; and if he will place a copy of the research in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: I expect to receive a final report from London Economics Ltd. before the end of the year, and will then place a copy in the Library.

Compulsory Tendering

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken on representations he has received concerning differential treatment between

outside and in-house contractors under the local government compulsory competitive tendering schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend considers all representations about the operation of compulsory competitive tendering. Where they relate the conduct of individual competitive tendering exercises by local authorities, he considers whether there are grounds for the use of his sanction powers under sections 19A and 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and sections 13 and 14 of the Local Government Act 1988, and uses them where appropriate.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the guidelines followed by the Audit Commission in settling the question of local authorities being allowed to undertake work for each other under the compulsory competitive tendering procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Any such guidelines are a matter for the Audit Commission.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many contracts have been put out to tender by local authorities under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1988; and how many contracts were awarded to outside contractors and how many were won in-house under the compulsory competitive tendering schemes.

Mr. Key: My Department does not collect this information, but indications are that the proportion of contracts awarded to external tenderers varies between services, and is highest for building cleaning work, at some 30 per cent.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a review of the retendering procedure for the carrying out of additional work to any main contracts under the compulsory competitive tendering scheme for local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have no plans to make changes to the regulations made on 19 March 1991 which provided, among other things, that where "other cleaning" work had been assigned to direct service organisations and the cost of additional work to meet the litter duties proposed by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 exceeded 20 per cent. of the cost of the work already being done, the work had to be put out to tender again.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amendments have been made to the threshold included in the Local Government Act 1988, for the smaller levels of work carried out in local government under compulsory competitive tendering schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: No amendments have been made to the de minimis threshold of £100,000, set out in the order made on 29 July 1988—SI No. 1988/1372.

Councillors

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to include in the consultative document on the internal management of local government the role of the elected member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Government intend to publish this document shortly; I cannot pre-empt its contents.

Nuclear Plants (Carbon Dioxide)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to commission a study of the effects of carbon dioxide releases to the atmosphere from sea water boiled off in the cooling of nuclear plants; and what information he presently possesses on the levels of carbon dioxide released to the atmosphere as a result of the nuclear fuel cycle from uranium mining to waste disposal.

Mr. Baldry: No. The amount of carbon dioxide released from sea water used for cooling power stations is negligible in global terms.

I understand that the nuclear industry and environmental analysts are in agreement that the nuclear power fuel cycle is responsible for about 4 per cent. of the carbon dioxide released from conventional coal-fired plant for an equivalent amount of delivered energy.

"Environment: Ideas for the 21st Century"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report published in December 1990, "Environment: Ideas for the 21st Century", prepared by the Dutch committee for long-term environmental policy.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Planning Controls

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the outcome of the consultation about planning controls over agriculture and forestry buildings conducted by his Department and the Welsh Office.

Sir George Young: On 5 October 1990 my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales issued a consultation paper inviting views on two significant changes to the present permitted development rights enjoyed by agriculture and forestry. We are grateful to the large number of bodies and individuals responding to this exercise. A list of their submissions is being placed in the Library of the House, where copies will be available on request. We have also published a research report on the subject—"Permitted Development Rights for Agriculture and Forestry"—which is available through HMSO.

The consultation paper proposed: (i) the extension to all areas of England and Wales of arrangements similar to those which already apply in the national parks, giving local planning authorities discretion to require details of new agricultural and forestry buildings to be submitted for approval; (ii) an increase, in all areas of England and Wales, in the minimum area of agricultural land attracting permitted development rights under class A of part 6 of schedule 2 to the General Development Order.

The Government have decided to implement both these changes by amendment to the General Development Order and to extend controls further in certain respects.

The current scheme in the national parks requires anyone who wishes to erect a farm or forestry building that falls within the definition of permitted development not

requiring a specific planning permission to first send basic information about the proposed development to the local planning authority. The authority then has 28 days to decide whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on its surroundings. If so, it may require the submission of details for formal approval. Consultation on submitted details would be a matter for the authority's discretion.

If the authority does not ask for details, the development can proceed after the expiry of the 28-day period. If details are sought, the authority's consent will be needed before the development can proceed, but it may concern itself only with the siting, design, and external appearance of the building. It may not challenge the need for the development. If the authority does not approve the proposed details, the applicant has the right of appeal to the Secretary of State.

In the light of the consultation responses, and the research carried out, we have decided to build on the experience of the national park arrangements by making them apply to all parts of England and Wales. In addition to the consultation proposals, we intend in the light of the views expressed: (i) to make the arrangements cover not only new buildings, but also significant extensions and alterations, and farm and forestry roads. Extensions and alterations and farm and forestry roads are already covered in the national parks; and (ii) both in national parks and elsewhere, to expand the considerations to be taken into account by local planning authorities to cover not only visual aspects, but also the desirability of preserving ancient monuments and their settings, known archaeological sites, the settings of listed buildings, and sites of recognised nature conservation value including SSSIs.

Some consultees argued that agricultural buildings should be subject to full development control. They claimed that the initial notification and any subsequent consideration of details would together take longer than the normal planning process. On the basis of experience in the national parks, the Government consider that in most cases the local authority will not need to request full details of the proposed development; the farmer will therefore usually be free to proceed after 28 days—much quicker than most planning consents.

As recommended in the research findings, the new arrangements will be accompanied by guidance to local planning authorities stressing the importance of reconciling environmental considerations with the operational requirements of farm and forestry business. We hope to incorporate that guidance in a revised version of planning policy guidance note 7, also reflecting the outcome of consultation on a draft version of that document.

We have considered whether local authorities should be required to charge fees in conjunction with these arrangements. The Government's policy is that local authorities' development control activities should be wholly funded by application fees. Accordingly, we have decided that a fee should be payable, in national parks and elsewhere at the initial notification stage; no further fee would be payable where the local authority decided to request details. The fee will be £20 initially. We will monitor the costs of the operation of the new system over the first three years, and thereafter aim to relate the fee to actual costs, as with other planning fees.

The second main proposal in the consultation paper for new planning controls over agriculture was the extension of full development control to all farm holdings of less than five hectares. We have considered carefully the case put by many consultees and in the research findings for a 10 hectare eligibility limit, but that would double the number of farm units coming within control—so that about one quarter of all holdings would come within control. We do not accept that the case has been made to bring in that degree of control.

We have, however, decided: (i) not to proceed with the idea of an exemption for genuine commercial holdings when extending planning control to holdings of less than five hectares; we have concluded that the proposed genuineness test would be unworkable; (ii) to extend control to separate areas of agricultural land of less than one hectare. Land below one hectare which forms part of a unit of five hectares or more but is separated from it, for example by a public road or by land in different ownership, will thus be subject to full development control.

Below these thresholds, all agricultural permitted development rights under class A of part 6 of schedule 2 to the General Development Order will be withdrawn. These new measures will provide more effective control over development associated with the fragmentation of holdings. They will discourage the erection under permitted development rights of buildings ultimately intended either for non-agricultural uses, or to support an application to erect an agricultural dwelling where in farming terms there may be no prospect of creating a viable holding.

In addition, we propose to improve controls over excavations and engineering operations and over livestock units. Excavations and engineering operations which individually or collectively exceed 0·5 hectares on one site will be brought within the discretionary control system for buildings, in the national parks and elsewhere.

We also intend to rectify an anomaly in the treatment of livestock units. Since 1988 specific planning permission has been required to erect livestock buildings within 400 m of residential or similar property. It has however been possible to use new agricultural buildings within the 400 m cordon for keeping livestock once five years have elapsed from erection. We will amend the General Development Order so that in future new buildings erected within the cordon will not be able to be used for livestock without specific planning permission, except in emergencies. And we will issue further guidance to local planning authorities on development near existing livestock farms.

Taken together, these changes will produce substantial environmental benefits in controlling the effects of agricultural and forestry development, while ensuring that the rural economy can continue to prosper and make its own contribution to the quality of the environment. They represent a significant extension of the rights of local authorities to take an interest in the activities of our agricultural and forestry industries. We therefore intend to monitor the operation of the new system, and to review the position in three years' time with a view to making any further modifications shown to be necessary, either by increasing or reducing control.

Nothing in this statement applies to planning controls over fish farms. We announced last December that we would be withdrawing permitted development rights for fish farm excavations and engineering operations in the national parks. In addition, during Parliament's consideration of the Planning and Compensation Bill, the Government introduced provisions to control floating

freshwater fish tanks and cages. I hope to announce shortly a consultation paper on the detailed implementation of these measures, and on the planning treatment of buildings and other developments on fish farms.

Minerals Survey

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the results of the 1988 minerals survey.

Mr. Yeo: I am pleased to announce that the results of the survey are published today, 11 June 1991. A copy is available in the House of Commons Library. These findings show that the majority of the minerals industry acts responsibly and effectively where our planning system requires them to restore their land when extraction or tipping ceases. But I would like to see the whole of the industry operating to the highest standards and actively ensuring that all their sites will be adequately restored and will not create future dereliction for public funds to reclaim.

I am very concerned that a third of the workings still in operation, and almost 60 per cent. of the areas for mineral waste tipping, either have no planning conditions requiring final reclamation or that the conditions which do exist are not thought satisfactory.

That is why the Government are taking a number of steps. The Planning and Compensation Bill now contains provisions to bring old interim development order mineral sites into the planning system and their operations up to modern standards.

We have instituted a review of the operation of the Minerals Act 1981, which will include how best to improve the activities on the many mineral permissions granted in the 1950s and 1960s. We are to fund a pilot study by Groundwork to encourage the improvement of the environmental performance of the minerals industry; and we are funding a number of important research projects concerned with improving reclamation practices within the industry.

All this should result in the minerals industry becoming "better neighbours" while still supplying the minerals which are needed by the country.

Plant and Machinery

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a review of the rating of plant and machinery.

Mr. Portillo: We have decided to establish a small expert committee to review the rating of plant and machinery. Much of the existing law has remained substantially unchanged for almost 30 years and has become outdated as a result of technological change. The committee will have the following terms of reference:

To consider the present law and practice in regard to the rating of plant and machinery in the United Kingdom; to make recommendations as to the principles that should be prescribed to comprise the extent of rateable property, having regard to the financial and other considerations involved, and with a view to removing inconsistencies and harmonising the law and practice in all parts of the United Kingdom; and to make proposals for giving effect to the recommendations.

It will be asked to report by 31 December 1992, so that any recommendations can be implemented for the 1995 revaluation of non-domestic property.

The chairman of the committee will be Mr. Derek Wood, QC. The other members will be decided after consultation with interested bodies.

Waltham Forest HAT

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the tenants of the Cathall road, Boundary road, Oliver close and Chingford hall estates in Waltham Forest will have the opportunity to vote for the establishment of a housing action trust.

Sir George Young: At a recent meeting, the joint steering group of tenant representatives proposed that a ballot of tenants on the proposal for a trust to redevelop the estates should begin on 13 July. The London borough of Waltham Forest has already confirmed that, if a trust is established after tenants vote in favour, they will fully support its implementation.

In view of the very high level of agreement that has been reached among the parties on how the HAT proposal can best serve the interests of the tenants of the estates, I am happy to confirm that the ballot will begin on the date proposed by tenant representatives.

I hope the tenants of the estates will seize the unique opportunity this proposal offers to transform housing and living conditions on the estates, and bring investment and jobs, in the interests of themselves, their families and the wider community in Waltham Forest.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any EC regulations or directives currently in force or pending which restrict or control the erection of high-volume waste incinerators in the vicinity of food storage and processing premises.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* There are no EC directives or regulations which specifically impose restrictions or controls of this kind.

The EC has adopted three directives on incineration: directive 84/360 on combating of air pollution from industrial plants and directive 89/369—new plant—and directive 89/429—existing plant—on municipal waste incineration. These set emission limits and combustion conditions which apply to new plant now, and will apply to existing plant over 6 tonnes/hour capacity from 1996, and from 2000, with interim conditions from 1995, to smaller plant.

In addition, directive 85/337 requires the environmental effects of major projects to be taken into consideration before development consent is given. These effects might include effects on food storage and processing premises in a project's vicinity.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Northern Iraq

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to protect Iraqi and Kurdish civilians who have assisted allied forces during the occupation in Northern Iraq, once allied forces have been withdrawn.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our aim has always been that those refugees and other civilians who fled their homes in March

should be able to return in conditions of safety and security. We are working to establish the conditions which would allow for their continuing safety after the withdrawal of allied forces from Iraq.

Israel

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the numbers of Palestinian dead and wounded, respectively, and of Israeli dead and wounded, respectively, since the start of the Intifada; and what representations he has made to Israel.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: According to our information, since the start of the Intifada 906 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli security forces and many thousands injured. There has recently been a disturbing increase in the number of Palestinians killed by other Palestinians: the total now stands at approximately 400. We regularly take up with the Israelis incidents where we believe their security forces have acted in breach of the fourth Geneva convention. According to our sources, at least 61 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians, but we have no reliable figures for numbers of Israelis injured. We continue to condemn violence on both sides.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken at United Nations Security Council level in respect of Israeli attacks on Lebanon on 4 June.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made clear to the Israelis in London and Jerusalem our concern about the recent raids. We believe that the key to peace on Israel's northern border is the effective deployment of the Lebanese army, a strong Government in Beirut and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 425.

Tibet

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy on Tibet.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 18 October 1990, column *905*, to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas).

Addis Ababa (British Subjects)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British subjects are at present trapped in Addis Ababa; how many have been invited to shelter in the British embassy during the current crisis; and what steps have been taken to ensure the safety of those not resident in the embassy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British community were advised to leave Ethiopia by the embassy on 23 May 1991. About 150 chose to remain. All were invited to shelter on the embassy compound. Over 60 accepted. All have now returned to their homes. The embassy remains in close touch with the community. Addis Ababa international airport reopened on 7 June 1991 and all British nationals are free to leave.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of current persecution of Iraqis by the Government of Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to monitor the situation in Iraq closely and receive information from a number of sources. We have made clear to the Iraqis that we would take the severest view of any evidence of persecution, which would contravene the terms of Security Council resolution 688.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the expulsion by the Sri Lankan Government of Mr. David Gladstone, British high commissioner in Colombo.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We believe that Sri Lankan action to be wholly unjustified. During four years in Colombo Mr. Galdstone has assiduously carried out Her Majesty's Government's policies, including effectively representing our concerns over Sri Lanka's unsatisfactory human rights record. It appears that his expulsion was motivated by a desire to stifle these criticisms.

Our immediate response has been to cancel high-level visits, including one I had planned for this month. We are also reviewing other aspects of our relationship.

We intend to move quickly to nominate a successor to Mr. Gladstone as high commissioner in Colombo.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he proposes, either bilaterally or as part of a Commonwealth initiative to protect the security of small states, to the invasion of Sierra Leone by troops from Liberia loyal to Charles Taylor.

Mrs. Chalker: Following discussions with the Government of Sierra Leone we are supplying a quantity of non-lethal defence equipment to the Sierra Leone army.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Import Restrictions

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration has been given to revising or removing the restrictions on imports from Vietnam following the introduction of the market system in that country.

Mr. Sainsbury: Restrictions on imports from Vietnam are subject to regular review in the light of foreign and trade policy considerations.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will impose restrictions upon imports of textiles from Thailand in the light of revelations about the use of child and forced labour in that country.

Mr. Sainsbury: The EC, acting under the aegis of the multi-fibre arrangement, already restricts imports of a

wide range of textiles products from Thailand. Child labour and forced labour are extremely complex issues often born out of poverty and social deprivation. The most effective way to eradicate these problems is, I believe, to improve the underlying economic and social conditions. Open trade, rather than further trade restrictions, is more likely to contribute to this process.

Israel

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on trade links between the United Kingdom and Israel; and what action he is taking to encourge them.

Mr. Sainsbury: Trade links between the United Kingdom and Israel are good. Trade between the UK and Israel exceeded £1 billion for the first time in 1990—UK exports £558 million, UK imports £502 million. Israel is a priority market for export promotion under the British Overseas Trade Board's forward plan. My Department supports the activities of the British overseas trade group for Israel. I intend to visit Israel later this year to encourage trade and investment links.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on his Department's note of guidance to British exporters regarding the Arab trade boycott of Israel; and when it was last revised.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department's guidance note on the Arab boycott seeks to inform British firms on Government policy towards the boycott, to help remove misunderstandings about the operation of the boycott as it affects them and to provide them with information to assist their decisions about trading with the Arab world and Israel.

The note, copies of which are in the Library, was last revised in January 1991.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on all recent and proposed trade missions to Israel supported financially or administratively by his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: During the financial year 1990-91, my Department provided financial support for three trade missions to Israel organised by the British overseas trade group for Israel. In the current financial year a further four such missions are due to receive support.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his current policy towards the collection of information by his Department on the number of jobs lost and beds closed as a result of units becoming NHS trusts; and if he will make a statement on his future policy on this matter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not anticipate bed closures and job losses
"as a result of units becoming NHS trusts".
Both trusts and directly managed units need to fit their staff numbers to the efficient fulfilment of the health care contracts placed on them by health authorities. As in the past, some will doubtless expand in numbers and other contract. We do not routinely collect this kind of data from either NHS trusts or directly managed units. It is the responsibility of NHS trusts to determine the number of staff needed to provide the level of patient care contracted for.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the timetable for the second wave of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Each trust application is the subject of public consultation lasting three months. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to be able to announce his decisions on the second wave applications in the autumn. The second wave of trusts will become fully operational in April 1992.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what types of information NHS trusts are expected to include in their business plans to be submitted to the national health service management executive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Business plans are expected to set out in financial terms how a trust will deliver the services that the purchasers have commissioned from it. The plans contain financial projections covering income and expenditure, assets, source and application of funds, contract and activity analysis, cash flow and capital projects. They also include information on services provided, quality, training and teaching, research and personnel.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date NHS trusts were required to submit their business plans to the NHS management executive; and how many trusts submitted their plans by the date.

Mr. Waldegrave: NHS trusts were originally asked to submit their business plans to the NHS management executive—NHSME—by 8 March 1991. Although none of the trusts met this deadline they discussed their reasons individually with the NHSME and of the 57 NHS trusts, 53 have now submitted complete business plans and another three partially completed plans.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current value of the net assets of each NHS trust used to calculate the capital element of their contract prices.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 5 February at columns 96-97.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what range of salaries or other remuneration is paid to chief executives, managing directors and directors of those NHS trusts which operate ambulance services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The salaries of chief executives and other directors are a matter for the trust board.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what commercial operations are now offered or are being proposed by those NHS trusts providing ambulance services other than the conveyance of patients or responding to emergencies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These NHS trusts offer a range of services. They are free to supplement their NHS income through additional services as long as they are not to the detriment of their patients and do not interfere with their ability to meet their NHS obligations.

Occupational Therapy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give details of the national shortfall in occupational therapists region by region;

(2) if he will give details of the number of trained occupational therapists who will complete training in each of the next five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Table 1 shows the percentage of occupational therapists posts in each region which had been vacant for three months or more at 31 March 1990. Steps are being taken to balance supply and demand. These include increasing the number of training places and encouraging and supporting retention and return initiatives undertaken by health authorities and the College of Occupational Therapists. These measures have contributed to the 28·7 per cent. increase in the number of occupational therapists between 1985 and 1989.

Table 2 shows the intakes to training in England and Wales for the last three years, and gives an indication of the potential output of qualified occupational therapists over the next three years.

Table 1
Vacancy levels for Occupational Therapists[1]

Regional Health Authority	*Vacancies as a percentage of Funded Establishment*
Northern	20·5
Yorkshire	14·3
Trent	14·5
East Anglian	12·0
North West Thames	16·6
North East Thames	22·0
South East Thames	23·7
South West Thames	16·7
Wessex	11·4
Oxford	10·1
South Western	7·1
West Midlands	13·6
Mersey	10·6
North Western	11·4

Source: Joint National Professional Manpower Initiative

[1] Vacancies of 3 months or more on 31 March 1990 as a percentage of funded establishment.

Table 2
Intakes to Occupational Therapist training[1]
England and Wales

1988	*1989*	*1990*
827	836	872

[1] Excludes "In-Service" training courses.

Fertility

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on how many men and women have received medical help for infertility in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will indicate which district health authorities provide *(a)* ovarian scanning, *(b)* radio-immune assay service, *(c)* artificial insemination, *(d)* IVF and *(e)* GIFT.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The provision of infertility services is a matter for individual health authorities to decide in the light of local needs and priorities.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities no longer provide sterilisation operations on social grounds; and if he will name these authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the provision of sterilisation operations is not routinely collected. Regional and district general managers were recently reminded of existing guidance which makes it clear that male and female sterilisation operations should be available under the NHS on both family planning and medical grounds.

Pain Relief

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now take steps to ensure that adequate data are collected within the NHS concerning pain relief; and what approaches he has had from the Pain Society on this matter.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on pain relief is not collected centrally because it is not a recognised medical specialty.

Pregnancy Testing

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district health authorities do not provide routine pregnancy testing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Housing and Health

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's assessment of the relationship between standards of housing and health.

Mr. Waldegrave: A range of environmental factors, including poor housing conditions, can have an adverse effect on health. "Health of the Nation", published on 4 June, a copy of which is available in the Library, sets out proposals for improving standards of health and includes details of action the Government have already taken to improve housing conditions.

Miscarriage Association

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to support the Miscarriage Association; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Miscarriage Association provides valuable support to many women who have had the misfortune to suffer a miscarriage. In recognition of its work we have recently awarded the association an increased core grant of £10,000 per annum and a project grant of £5,000 per annum. Both grants are for three years. The project grant is intended to help the Miscarriage Association improve the service it provides to ethnic minority communities.

Breast Screening

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the relevance to the United Kingdom breast screening programme of the results of the Canadian trial of breast screening.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The adverse results of the reported Canadian trial have no direct relevance to the NHS breast screening programme. These research results relate to women under 50 while the United Kingdom programme covers women aged 50 and over. There is considerable international research evidence that in older, post-menopausal, women mammographic screening, followed by appropriate treatment where necessary, can reduce mortality from breast cancer by about a quarter in the age group screened. Women who are invited to attend for screening should do so.

Death Rates

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish tables showing the death rate trends for coronary heart disease, stroke and cancer in each social class on the same basis of sex and age-group as that provided in annexes A, B and C of the document entitled, "The Health of the Nation";

(2) if he will publish tables showing the death rate trends for coronary heart disease, stroke and cancer of each national health service region in England, showing males and females separately and distinguishing age groups in the same manner as annexes A, B and C of the document entitled, "The Health of the Nation"; and if he will give the average trends on the same basis for England as a whole over the same period.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Child Employment Legislation

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his estimate of the number of schoolchildren working part-time who are in breach of child employment legislation regulations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of schoolchildren working part-time who are in breach of child employment legislation/regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information relating to prosecutions and convictions for the illegal employment of children in different areas of employment is shown in the tables.

(a) Non-industrial undertakings

Figures notified to the Home Office for prosecutions and convictions in England and Wales under sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933:

Year	Prosecutions	Convictions
1979	23	18
1980	26	25
1981	24	22
1982	17	16
1983	12	12
1984	12	9
1985	11	9
1986	2	2
1987	8	8
1988	28	22
1989	23	19

Information relating to the employment of children in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

(b) Industrial undertakings

Informations laid by HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates for breaches of section 1 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children's Act 1920 and concerning the illegal employment of children.

Year[1]	Informations laid	Convictions
1981	4	4
1982	4	4
1983	3	3
1984	6	6
1985	8	6
[2]1986	4	4
1986-87	11	9
1987-88	2	2
1988-89	7	7
1989-90	8	6

[1] 1981-85, calendar years.
[2] 1986, January to March 1986.
1986-87 onwards, years commencing 1 April.

(c) Agricultural Undertakings

Information laid by HM Agricultural Inspectorate against persons at work who put at risk children under the age of 16 by the contravention of agricultural legislation:

Year[1]	Informations laid	Convictions
1981	40	37
1982	31	24
1983	18	16
1984	16	15
1985	30	27
1986	27	22
1987	21	15
[2]1988	3	3
[3]1988-89	18	17

[1] 1981-1987—Calendar years.
[2] 1988—1 January to 31 March.
[3] 1988-89—Year commencing 1 April (provisional).

Figures for industrial and agricultural undertakings apply to Great Britain

GP Fundholders (Contracts)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions exist on the freedom of general practitioner fundholders and national health service consultants to consider contracts along the lines of those contracted by Trafalgar Medical Services in Sheffield; and what monitoring his Department proposes to undertake of such arrangements.

Mr. Dorrell: General practice fundholders are free to place contracts for the limited range of hospital services covered by the fundholding scheme with providers who they consider will give the best care to their patients.

Where general practice fundholders wish to contract with a non-NHS provider with which any member of the practice is connected, the National Health Service

(Fund-holding Practices) (General) Regulations 1991 require the practice to obtain the written consent of the regional health authority. Regional health authorities are expected to consider whether such proposals will provide a proper quality of care for patients and value for money compared with the alternatives available.

HIV (Anonymised Screening)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of people tested for HIV in the programme of anonymised screening at drug dependency units, for each of the health authorities participating in the programme; and what was the date on which the programme began in each authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Voluntary unlinked anonymous HIV antibody surveillance of saliva specimens from injecting drug users at a range of centres including drug dependency units began in December 1989 in London and in January 1990 outside London. The results will be published shortly.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give his latest estimate of the number of pregnant women who have been tested for HIV in the programme of unlinked anonymised screening of *(a)* rubella blood samples, *(b)* Guthrie cards and *(c)* in total, for each of the health authorities participating in the programme; and if he will give the dates of commencement of the programmes in each authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Unlinked anonymous surveillance of leftover blood samples from women attending antenatal clinics began in early 1990 in centres in inner London and in other districts in the Thames regions. In districts outside the Thames regions the programme began in mid to late 1990. At 22 May 1991, a total of 32,979 samples from women in inner London, 20,133 samples from women in other districts in the Thames regions and 21,144 samples from women in districts outside the Thames regions had been tested. Information about the number of Guthrie cards tested is not available centrally. The Guthrie card survey is not part of the Government's programme of suveys but is funded by the Medical Research Council and co-ordinated by the Institute of Child Health.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give his latest estimate of the number of hospital in-patients who have been tested for HIV in the programme of unlinked anonymised screening, for each of the health authorities participating in the programme; and if he will give the dates of commencement of the programme in each authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A feasibility study of unlinked anonymised HIV surveillance of hospital patients began in two centres in February 1991. Sera are stored and will be tested in batches. No blood has yet been tested.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the total number of people screened for HIV in the programme of unlinked anonymised screening *(a)* by each of the health authorities participating in the programme and *(b)* in total.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of people screened for HIV in the programme of anonymised HIV surveys is given in the following table.

	Number
Ante natal clinics to 22 May 1991	
South-West Thames RHA	9,732
South-East Thames RHA	15,121
North-East Thames RHA	20,113
North-West Thames RHA	8,146
Yorkshire RHA	15,979
North Western RHA	5,165
Genito urinary medicine clinics to 24 May 1991	
2 London clinics	5,085
4 clinics outside London	6,610
Saliva swabs from injecting drug users	
The results of this survey are not yet available but will be published soon.	

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of people tested for HIV in the programme of anonymised screening at genito-urinary medicine clinics, for each of the health authorities participating in the programme; and what was the date on which the programme began in each authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The studies in genito-urinary medicine clinics began in spring of 1990 in two clinics in London and later that year in four clinics outside London. At 24 May 1991, a total of 5,085 samples for people attending clinics in London, and 6,610 samples from people attending clinics outside London had been tested.

Kidney Dialysis

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the numbers of people receiving kidney dialysis treatment in the age brackets *(a)* 0 to 20 years, *(b)* 21 to 40 years, *(c)* 41 to 60 years and *(d)* 61 to 80 years, or comparable age divisions.

Mr. Dorrell: The table gives estimates of the numbers of people receiving dialysis treatment according to 20-year age bands as at 31 December 1990.

Age	*Number*
Under 20	349
21 to 40	2,163
41 to 60	3,233
61 to 80	1,907
Over 80	101

The figures are based on returns from renal units in 1990 adjusted to take account of the response rate and apportioned according to the age distribution of services in 1989.

Blood Transfusion Service

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the relationship between the blood transfusion service and the national health service hospital trusts; whether it is intended to give the service its own trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The establishment of NHS trusts has had no effect on the relationship between hospitals and the regional transfusion centres—RTCs—which continue to supply blood to all hospitals on a basis of clinical need. There are no current applications from RTCs for trust status.

Kidney Transplant Operations

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of a kidney transplant operation; who bears the cost; and what part of it is made up of booking the operating theatre.

Mr. Dorrell: The average annual cost of a kidney transplantation in the year of operation is around £10,000. For NHS patients the cost is borne by the health authority responsible for the care of the patient. The cost of booking the operating theatre is not separately identifiable.

Prescription Charges

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much it would cost to make the long-term sick in receipt of invalidity benefit automatically exempt from prescription charges;

(2) how many invalidity benefit recipients are not entitled to free prescriptions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

East Birmingham Hospital

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people had been waiting for more than a year for an operation in East Birmingham hospital on *(a)* 31 December 1989 and *(b)* 31 March 1991;

(2) what percentage of the total on in-patient waiting lists at East Birmingham hospital on 31 March 1990 had been waiting for *(a)* more than one year and *(b)* more than two years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Waiting time information by individual hospital is not available centrally. The hon. Member might like to contact Mr. Nigel Thompson, the chairman of East Birmingham health authority, for details.

Smoking

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's assessment of the medical effects of smoking 20 cigarettes a day.

Mr. Dorrell: Cigarette consumption at this level results in a serious risk of developing a whole range of life-threatening diseases. The smoker's chances of contracting lung cancer, chronic obstructive airways disease and coronary heart disease are much enhanced. In addition there is an increased risk of contracting the following diseases:

- Cerebrovascular disease
- Cancer of the lip, oral cavity and pharynx
- Cancer of the oesophagus
- Cancer of the larynx
- Cancer of the pancreas
- Peripheral vascular disease.

There is also evidence that other conditions are associated with smoking, including:

- Low birthweight babies (where the mother smokes during pregnancy)
- Aortic aneurysm
- Cancer of the bladder
- Cancer of the cervix
- Cancer of the stomach
- Cancer of the kidney
- Peptic ulcer.

National Association of Young People in Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his policy with regard to the recognition of the National Association of Young People in Care as a representative body;

(2) what steps he is taking to offer financial support to the National Association of Young People in Care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The association is one of a range of voluntary organisations which is routinely consulted on policy and practice developments. The association has submitted an application for funding in the current financial year. A meeting to discuss this was held with representatives of National Association of Young People in Care on 9 May when further information was sought about their proposed new structure. A final decision about funding will be made shortly.

Chernobyl Nuclear Accident

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representation Her Majesty's Government had at the conference hosted by the International Atomic Energy Agency between 21 to 24 May in Vienna, on the IAEA international advisory committee report on the consequences of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident; whether any United Kingdom Government scientists were involved in the study; and what study has been made of the report in regard to the applicability of its conclusions and recommendations to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: Participants at the conference comprised a number of people from the United Kingdom including a doctor from the Department of Health and a scientist from the National Radiological Protection Board. Both attended in their capacity as members of the International Advisory Committee—IAC—whose membership was drawn from independent scientists and organisations with an interest in radiological protection and epidemiology. Also in attendance was an observer from the nuclear installations inspectorate.

The Government are currently considering the report from the IAC and will take account of any factors which may be relevant to the position in the United Kingdom.

NHS Complaints Procedure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether patients attending private consultants' clinics at general pracitioner fundholders' premises will be entitled to use national health service complaints procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* Where the services of a consultant are purchased for the patient of a fundholding practice out of the practice fund and the consultant is acting in a private capacity, a complaint against the referring doctor may be pursued under the Naitonal Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations 1974. If in these circumstances the patient wishes to pursue a complaint against the consultant, he would need to do so, if there was no possibility of conciliation directly with the consultant, either through the General Medical Council or the legal process depending on the nature of the complaint. Private care can of course be purchased for NHS patients by any commissioner of care, whether a district health authority or a GP fundholder.

HIV Tests

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the cumulative totals of positive HIV antibody test results reported by each health authority on *(a)* 31 March 1989, *(b)* 30 September 1989, *(c)* 31 March 1990, *(d)* 30 September 1990 and *(e)* 31 March 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information available to the Department on the cumulative totals of positive HIV antibody test results reported by each health authority is given in the tables.

United Kingdom HIV antibody positive persons reported by region for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland
Cumulative totals up to end of March 1989

	Total reports
England	
Northern	286
Yorkshire	[1]311
Trent	248
East Anglia	[1]160
North West Thames	2,827
North East Thames	1,764
South East Thames	917
South West Thames	268
Wessex	234
Oxford	[1]332
South Western	237
West Midlands	353
Mersey	154
North Western	348
Channel Isles	20
Wales	124
Northern Ireland	55
Scotland	1,621

United Kingdom HIV antibody positive persons reported by region
Cumulative totals up to end of September 1989

	Total reports
England	
Northern	305
Yorkshire	323
Trent	283
East Anglia	171
North West Thames	3,089
North East Thames	2,048
South East Thames	979
South West Thames	303
Wessex	251
Oxford	349
South Western	259
West Midlands	375
Mersey	162
North Western	388
Channel Isles	20
Wales	144
Northern Ireland	62
Scotland	1,707

United Kingdom antibody positive persons reported by region
Cumulative totals up to end of March 1990

	Total reports
England	
Northern	333
Yorkshire	356
Trent	359
East Anglia	188
North West Thames	4,073
North East Thames	2,263
South East Thames	1,434
South West Thames	337
Wessex	291
Oxford	365
South Western	278
West Midlands	414
Mersey	177
North Western	747
Channel Islands	23
Wales	157
Northern Ireland	68
Scotland	1,768

United Kingdom HIV antibody positive persons reported by region
Cumulative totals up to end of September 1990

	Total reports
England	
Northern	348
Yorkshire	384
Trent	378
East Anglia	197
North West Thames	4,497
North East Thames	2,505
South East Thames	1,592
South West Thames	385
Wessex	307
Oxford	384
South Western	298
West Midlands	479
Mersey	182
North Western	670
Channel Islands	24
Wales	176
Northern Ireland	77
Scotland	1,840

Country and region of 1st report	*Cumulative total Cases*
England	
Northern	354
Yorkshire	397
Trent	396
East Anglia	204
North West Thames	4,621
North East Thames	2,569
South East Thames	1,681
South West Thames	434
Wessex	328
Oxford	403
South Western	329
West Midlands	510
Mersey	185
North Western	696
Wales	229
Northern Ireland	82
Scotland	1,919
United Kingdom total	15,337
Channel Isles	
Isle of Man	29

WALES

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage of Welsh health authorities' current budgets are allocated for extra-contractual referrals.

(2) what is the estimated expenditure by the Welsh health authorities on extra-contractual referrals in April and May; and how it relates to the budget set aside by those authorities for such referrals.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Health authorities have made provision in their budgets for the cost of anticipated extra-contractual referrals—ECRs. The amounts in each case depend on the expected pattern of referrals and the extent to which these have been covered by contracts. Not all authorities have reached final agreements on contracts and which services will be provided "off contract". It is therefore not possible to provide the information in the form requested at present. Authorities have been asked to give details of ECRs for the first two months of this year and to indicate whether or not their provision is adequate to meet the actual demand assessed on this basis. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when this information is available.

A465

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects all outstanding statutory procedures on the planned A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais improvement to be completed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Provided the outstanding issues in the inspector's report of the public inquiry can be satisfactorily resolved, statutory procedures could be completed later this year.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the nature of the problem which has caused extended statutory procedures on the planned A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais improvement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The inspector who held the public inquiry into the scheme recommended significant alterations which have required further investigation and consultation with a number of interests.

Ophthalmology

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy considerations led to his decision to set up a second ophthalmology treatment centre in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The additional treatment centre intended for Bridgend is proposed as a result of the large ophthalmology waiting lists. The centre will provide an accessible and cost effective means of reducing the lists in south and west Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had *(a)* with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and *(b)* with local consultant ophthalmologists in Wales concerning medical follow-up responsibilities for patients on the ophthalmology waiting lists receiving eye surgery at the existing Bangor and proposed Bridgend treatment centres.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Our officials discussed follow-up and other procedures with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists prior to establishing the Bangor centre. Patients attend two follow-up consultations arranged with the centre in line with the guidelines of the royal college.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account he took of the recommendations of the Royal College of Ophthalmology on staffing requirements per 100,000 people, prior to his decision on a second ophthalmology treatment centre in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The decision to establish a second ophthalmic treatment centre was taken following consideration of the particular waiting times in this speciality and local circumstances and opportunities. Detailed staffing requirements will be settled in discussion with the host authority.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what length of contract will be offered to consultants to be employed in the ophthalmology treatment centre to be opened in Bridgend; and how many consultants will be employed.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Staffing levels for the new ophthalmology treatment centre, Bridgend are currently under discussion with the host district health authority. Individual contracts for staff at the centre will be the responsibility of Mid Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he now has to reduce waiting lists in ophthalmology and general surgery in the catchment area of South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Bids for funds under the waiting times initiative for 1991-92 have been invited from all health authorities in Wales. South Glamorgan DHA is able to refer general surgery patients to the treatment centre at Bridgend and ophthalmology patients to the Bangor treatment centre and will also be able to refer patients to the new cataract centre when it becomes operational.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations with ophthalmologists he undertook prior to making his decision on the setting up of a second ophthalmology treatment centre for Wales at Bridgend general hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The decision to establish a second ophthalmology treatment centre at Bridgend was taken after consideration of the waiting list position in ophthalmology in south Wales and local circumstances and opportunities.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the reorganisation of the Forestry Commission in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have endorsed the proposal by the forestry commissioners that they should carry out an internal reorganisation of the commission in order to achieve a clearer distinction between those staff concerned with its regulatory and advisory duties as a Government Department and those engaged in the management of its forests. The commissioners plan to implement this reorganisation by 1 April 1992.

The forestry commissioners have decided that the headquarters' offices of the Forestry Authority and the Forestry Enterprise in Wales will remain in Aberystwyth. They are also proposing that the commission's forests in Wales should continue to be managed by the existing eight forest district offices, but that there should be three new local offices to administer the authority's functions. The details of the reorganisation are currently being discussed with staff representatives.

Local Plans

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he intends to take to ensure that local plans are prepared for *(a)* Alyn and Deeside district council, *(b)* Carmarthen district council, *(c)* Ceredigion district council, *(d)* Glyndwr district council, *(e)* Montgomeryshire district council, *(f)* Neath borough council, *(g)* Preach district council and *(h)* South Pembrokeshire district council.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The preparation and adoption of local plans by planning authorities is not a statutory requirement. It is for each authority to decide which parts of their area should be covered by local plans. Planning policy guidance (PPG) note 12 of November 1988 and PPG15 (Wales) of October 1990 urged district planning authorities to extend and complete their local plan coverage. The Planning and Compensation Bill, which is currently before Parliament, includes a provision which will place a mandatory duty on each district council and each national park authority to prepare and adopt a single local plan covering the whole of its area.

British Rail (Meetings)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the dates on which Ministers at the Welsh Office have met the chairman and other senior executives of British Rail during the past 18 months, noting the main issues raised at each such meeting.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend or I met the chairman or other directors of British Rail on 10 May, 13 June and 28 November 1990 and on 8 February, 12 February and 13 May 1991. We discussed a wide range of issues concerning rail services for Wales.

Dentists (Patient Care)

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from dentists in Wales since the implementation of the new contract on patient care; and what were the main concerns expressed.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Department has received two representations from individual dentists about the new contract. The representations concerned the treatment of child patients in relation to the community dental service and alleged decline in gross income.

Old Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools built wholly or mainly before 1903 there are in each of the local education authorities of Wales; and what plans he has to rebuild them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Details of the ages of school buildings are not held centrally. Reponsibility for the provision, repair and maintenance of school buildings rests with local education authorities.

Education and Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the proportion of persons aged 16 years leaving full-time education or training in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No information is collected centrally from the further education sector about 16-year-old leavers. The school leavers survey collects information about leavers from the school sector; however 1989-90 information is not yet available and the survey for 1990-91 has yet to commence.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet leaders in Wales of the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Department is in regular and close contact with the Wales development officer of the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial aid he gives to the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A total of £70,000 in 1991-92, including funding under the elderly initiative and the mental illness strategy and to support the work of the society's development officer in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research moneys he gives to the Alzheimer's Disease Society in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No money is specifically earmarked to the Alzheimer's Disease Society for research. However, the Government are contributing towards a collaborative study led by the Institute of Human Ageing, Liverpool into the incidence of dementia. As part of this, some £30,000 each year is being provided for that part of the research being undertaken at University college of North Wales, Bangor.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what help he proposes to give to carers concerning Alzheimer's disease in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Welsh Office-led all-Wales mental illness strategy and our comprehensive programme of action to develop social care more generally are intended to promote the development of services which provide care for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, including appropriate support for families and friends who contribute to care. These initiatives are supported by record levels of resources, including £4·6 million in 1991-92 for the mental illness strategy—more than double last year's allocation; and over £4 million under the elderly initiative, the new scheme to promote more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and those with sensory or physical disabilities, and in funding for voluntary organisations, including the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of sufferers from Alzheimer's disease in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Based on an estimate derived from the NHS Health Advisory Service's publication "The Rising Tide—Developing Services for Mental Illness in Old Age" published in November 1982, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, there are approximately 28,000—9,500 males and 18,500 females—suffering from Alzheimer's disease in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many carers of Alzheimer's disease sufferers there are in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The precise number of carers is not known, but we recognise that many people contribute in different ways to the support of this group of vulnerable people.

Alder Hey Royal Children's Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet parents of children of Deeside, Clwyd, who are awaiting heart surgery or who are deemed likely to need surgery at Alder Hey royal children's hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I have no plans to intervene in contractual arrangements between health authorities in Wales and their chosen provider units.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children from *(a)* Clwyd, *(b)* Gwynedd and *(c)* Powys have had heart surgery performed at the Alder Hey royal children's hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Data provided by Mersey regional health authority show that no children from Clwyd, Gwynedd or Powys had surgical operations on the heart at Alder Hey royal children's hospital in 1989-90, the only year for which data are available. This information is based only on those cases where the hospital episode has finished, and complete clinical details are available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money, as a down payment, health authorities in Wales are required to pay to the appropriate health authority, to which Alder Hey hospital answers, before operations are performed or before youngsters are placed on the waiting list.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. District health authorities strike contractual agreements, including with Alder Hey hospital, under which they agree to make regular payments for the care provided or make individual extra-contractual arrangements, mainly for emergency cases, which incur payment after treatment has been provided.

Dogs

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of all breeds of dogs in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Consultants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new consultants were appointed in 1989 to work at the treatment centres at *(a)* Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor, *(b)* general surgery at Bridgend and *(c)* elective orthopaedics at Rhydlafar.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The orthopaedic treatment centre, Rhydlafar, was the only centre to become operational during 1989. One additional consultant was appointed.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what lengths of contracts were given to the consultant surgeons employed in the treatment centres in *(a)* ophthalmology at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor, *(b)* general surgery at Bridgend and *(c)* elective orthopaedics at Rhydlafar.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Department has contracts with the host district health authorities for the provision of treatment at the treatment centres. Contracts for individual members of staff are the management responsibility of those host health authorities.

Employment Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of employment training places for each of the counties of Wales in 1990-91 and 1991-92, indicating the difference over the years by number and by percentage.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on the number of ET places provided for each of the Welsh counties in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is not available. The Government now fund each training and enterprise council for employment training according to the number of training weeks delivered, and the outputs achieved. It is for TECs to determine, in the light of local circumstances, how many places to purchase.

Residential Homes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many residential homes for the elderly mentally infirm or very dependent he has visited in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 4 June 1991]:* None, but I have recently visited a number of hospitals which have facilities for elderly mentally infirm patients, including Bronllys hospital, Brecon and Valley hospital, Anglesey.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Eye Surgery

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current waiting time before a patient receives an operation for cataracts at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: Waiting times vary from two to three weeks for urgent cases to over two years for a few non-urgent cases.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently on the waiting list for cataract operations at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: The estimated number of patients is 2,900.

Fair Employment Commission

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new members of staff have been appointed to the Fair Employment Commission since 1 January 1991; and how many of them were *(a)* Protestants, *(b)* Roman Catholics and *(c)* other religions.

Mr. Needham: The commission has declared its intention to make monitoring information available on a yearly basis. To make such information available more frequently and covering shorter periods could infringe the confidentiality requirements of the Fair Employment Acts by disclosing the religious beliefs of identifiable individuals.

Cost Limits

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1991-92 running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments.

Mr. Brooke: The running cost limit for 1991-92 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments is £652·6 million. Details of the provision for individual Northern Ireland Departments are set out in the Northern Ireland estimates which were laid before the House today.

Strangford Lough

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for the participation in the management of Strangford lough of persons owning land along the lough shore.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* On 6 June 1991, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland issued a consultation paper on the future management structure for Strangford lough and on a marine nature reserve. It is being circulated widely. Officials will arrange meetings to explain the proposals further. The proposed management structure would comprise an executive committee of representatives of bodies with statutory powers in the area and of an advisory committee representing local interests. These will include lough shore land owners and other local residents, lough-users and conservationists. The closing date for comments on the consultation paper is 18 October 1991. The Department will then produce a policy document.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs Offences

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women are serving sentences in British prisons under section 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; and how many of these are deportees.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 30 June 1990, a provisional figure of about 320 females were serving sentences for all types of drugs offences in prison service establishments. The only readily available information on the types of drug offences does not separately identify males and females. It is published annually in Prison Statistics England and Wales (table 1(a) of the latest volume, for 1989, Cm. 1221), copies of which are in the Library. Information on whether they were liable for deportation on completion of sentence is not available centrally.

Electoral Arrangements

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) of 14 May, *Official Report*, columns *71-72*, if he will set out the minimum notice which the proposed advertising campaign for information regarding absent voting will give to electors; and if he will make a statement on discussions he has held with electoral registration officers on this matter.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the unlikely event that Parliament was dissolved on the same day as that on which a general election was announced, the proposed advertisements would appear in newspapers on a Wednesday, and applications for an absent vote would have to be returned by the following Monday. On past experience, however, electors will probably have about 12 days' notice in which to apply for an absent vote.

The proposed campaign will be similar to one which ran before the 1987 general election and will take account of comments received from electoral registration officers following that campaign.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in summary the information he has on procedures for absent voting at general elections in member states of the European Community outlining criteria used for registration of absent voting for various grounds such as *(a)* ill health, *(b)* employment, *(c)* absence from home and *(d)* overseas residence.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Age of Consent

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the ages of consent for heterosexual men and women and homosexual men and women in Britain and in each of the European countries, East and West.

Mr. John Patten: We do not have the full information requested, but I refer the hon. Member to my letter of 4 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), a copy of which has been placed in the Library. This gives details of the ages of consent in European Community states.

Domestic Violence

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men received a custodial sentence for domestic violence in the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the average length of sentence;

(2) how many incidents of domestic violence were reported in the last year for which figures are available; and how many resulted in *(a)* a charge, *(b)* a prosecution and *(c)* a conviction.

Mr. John Patten: Information collected centrally on court proceedings is not in sufficient detail to distinguish offences of domestic violence from other violent offences. Some information on domestic violence as a component of offences of violence against the person is given in the Home Office Research Bulletin 27, a copy of which is in the Library.

Asylum Seekers

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to consult non-governmental organisations about the reform of arrangements for asylum seekers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are in regular contact with organisations active in the asylum field and their views will be taken into account in the Government's continuing review of their arrangements. If decisions are taken with direct implications for outside organisations they will, of course, be discussed with them.

Obscene Telephone Calls

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many obscene telephone calls were reported in the last year for which figures are available; how many gave rise to *(a)* a charge, *(b)* a prosecution and *(c)* a conviction; what plans he has to review the present maximum penalty for this offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The figures requested are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information collected centrally does not distinguish making an obscene telephone call from other offences under the Telecommunications Act 1984. The maximum penalty for this offence will be increased from a fine of £400 to a fine of £1,000 by fine upratings in the Criminal Justice Bill.

Homosexual Offences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the cost to the prison service of gaoling the men who are sentenced each year for the consenting homosexual offences of soliciting, buggery, procuring and indecency, including the cost of keeping these men in custody for the full terms of their sentences.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1989—the latest information available—178 men were received into prison service establishments following conviction for buggery and indecency between males. At 30 June 1989 the population held for such offences was 375.

The population breakdown between prison types and the relevant cost per week (1989-90) was as follows:

Type of establishment	*Number*	*Cost per week* £
Local/remand	156	309
Training prison: open	11	218
Closed	198	257
Young Offender Institution	10	346
	375	280

Information is not readily available for the length of sentence given or served for such offences. It is therefore not possible to estimate the cost of keeping these men in prison for the full terms of their sentence.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the annual police and court costs involved in prosecuting gay and bisexual men for consenting homosexual soliciting, buggery, procuring and indecency, including men prosecuted for homosexual indecency under byelaws, public order legislation and common law.

Mr. John Patten: Prosecution costs are not available in the form requested.

Women Prisoners

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide the latest figures on numbers of suicides, attempted suicides and self-mutilation inflicted by prisoners at each of the women's prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since 1980, seven women have died at their own hand while in prison service custody. The establishments involved were Holloway, in 1981 and 1985, Risley, in 1986, 1987 and twice in 1989, and Durham in 1990. Accurate information on the incidence of attempted suicide and deliberate self-injury by prisoners is not available. It is planned to introduce new arrangements for reporting all such incidents, in line with a recommendation made by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in his report on suicide and self-harm in prison.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for the latest year for which there are figures *(a)* how many women were sent to prison for violent offences, *(b)* what percentage this is of the total female prison population, *(c)* what percentage this is of the total prison population and *(d)* what percentage this is of the population of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: Excluding those committed in default of payment of a fine, 380 females were received into prison service establishments in England and Wales in 1989 under sentence for offences of violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery. On 30 June 1989 the population of females serving sentences for these offences was 323 and formed 18 per cent. of the female prison population and 0·7 per cent. of the male and female prison population. They also represented six per million of the estimated resident male and female population of England and Wales.

Pornography

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effects the proposed implementation of the single European market in 1992 will have on the importation of sexually explicit material classified as pornography; and whether the Government will seek special powers to maintain the status quo whereby sexually explicit material which is freely available in other EC member states will continue to be excluded from the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: The introduction of the single market will entail changes in the nature of our customs controls

with a greater emphasis on selective checks and intelligence. However, it will not require us to relax our prohibitions on the supply of obscene material or our internal controls on display and supply.

Deportation

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women, by nationality, are currently awaiting deportation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figures in the following table relate to those currently awaiting deportation as the subject of a deportation order made under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1971, where a recommendation for deportation made by a court was part of a custodial sentence; under section 3(5)(b) of that Act where deportation on conducive grounds will follow a custodial sentence; or under section 3(5)(a) of that Act where a woman has remained beyond her permitted stay or has breached conditions attached to her stay. The information on deportation orders made under section 3(6) and 3(5)(b) relates to the period since 1 January 1988, while the third category relates to the period since 1 June 1990.

Women subject to a deportation order

Nationals of	*Section 3(6)*	*Section 3(5)(b)*	*Section 3(5)(a)*
Bangladesh	—	—	1
Belize	—	1	—
Brazil	3	—	—
Cameron	—	—	1
Chile	1	—	—
Colombia	19	—	2
France	1	—	—
Germany	1	—	—
Ghana	9	—	16
Grenada	1	—	—
Guyana	2	—	—
Holland	2	2	—
Hong Kong	—	—	1
India	3	—	2
Iran	—	—	2
Jamaica	22	1	2
Malaysia	—	—	1
Mauritius	—	—	1
Nigeria	63	1	20
Pakistan	—	—	2
Philippines	—	1	2
Poland	—	—	1
Sierra Leone	—	—	2
Spain	2	—	—
Trinidad and Tobago	2	—	—
Turkey	—	—	1
United States of America	7	—	—
Uruguay	1	—	—
Yugoslavia	1	—	—
Zambia	1	—	—
Zimbabwe	—	—	1

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women have been returned to Nigeria; and how many are awaiting deportation to Nigeria since the introduction of decree 33.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 10 October 1990, when the Nigerian Government promulgated decree 33, 82 women have been returned to Nigeria under deportation powers, including 59 who chose to make supervised departures; and 27 Nigerian women are currently the subject of deportation orders. None of those who have left was affected by decree 33. Two of those awaiting deportation committed drug offences in this country on or after 10 October 1990 and may therefore be liable to prosecution on their return to Nigeria.

Prisoners

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the cost of detaining *(a)* a category A prisoner and *(b)* a category B prisoner.

Mrs. Rumbold: During 1989-90—the latest figures available—the average cost per week of detaining an inmate in a typical dispersal prison, the type of prison in which category A inmates are normally held, was £575. The cost per week in category B training prisons was £318.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is a requirement for prisoners to be notified of decisions by the parole board in writing.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no such requirement.

Mr. Terry Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is responsible for communicating the decisions of the parole board to prisoners at Sudbury prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: All parole decisions are notified by the parole unit to the governors of the establishments; they are then responsible for informing prisoners.

Immigration

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigrants there have been from the Indian sub-continent since the passage of the Immigration Act 1981 each year since 1982.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of persons from the Indian sub-continent accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in the years 1982-90 is published in table 15 of the Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1989" (Cm. 1124), and in table 1 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 3/91 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Third and Fourth Quarters and Year 1990". A copy of both publications is in the Library.

Gambling

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been considered by his Department on fruit machine gambling by young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The results of the Home Office research study "Amusement Machines: Dependency and Delinquency", published in July 1988, showed that very few young people are at risk of becoming dependent on amusement machines and that there is no clear evidence of any association between the playing of machines and delinquency. We have received no reliable new evidence to contradict these results and remain of the view that further legislative controls are not justified at present.

Jury Vetting

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate for the years 1988, 1989 and 1990 the number of occasions in which the police national computer has been accessed for the purposes of jury vetting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The purposes for accessing the police national computer are not recorded centrally. However, statistical returns from chief officers of police show that under arrangement described in Home Office circular 43/1988, criminal record checks were made of the following number of people summoned for jury service:

	Number
1988	1,152
1989	5,602
1990	4,146

Prison Sentences

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list how many men and women received life sentences in England and Wales for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1990 are not yet available.

Number of males and females who received 'Life' sentences 1979 to 1989 England and Wales

Year	*Males*	*Females*
1979	149	8
1980	181	2
1981	153	7
1982	206	9
1983	136	4
1984	138	6
1985	164	6
1986	183	9
1987	169	5
1988	206	12
1989	176	11

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of sentence served by men and women in England and Wales for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The readily available information is published annually in Prison Statistics England and Wales (tables 3.15, 3.16, 4.15, 4.16, 5.15 and 5.16 of the latest volume, for 1989, Cm. 1221), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and women were released on licence from a life sentence in England and Wales for each year from 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The readily available information relates to prisoners released from prison service establishments and is published annually in Prison Statistics England and Wales (table 8.5 of the latest volume, for 1989, Cm. 1221), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mental Health Act

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and women in England and Wales were given an absolute discharge under the Mental Health Act for each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The number of males and females in England and Wales who were given an absolute discharge, by tribunal under part V of the Mental Health Act 1983 or by the Secretary of State under sections 41 to 49 of the 1983 Act and 65 to 74 of the 1959 Acts, between 1980 and 1989—the last year for which information is available—is given in the table.

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Males	7	8	6	19	26	20	18	11	9	16
Females	—	1	—	1	2	3	4	4	5	2
Total	7	9	6	20	28	23	22	15	14	18

Dog Attacks

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reported attacks have taken place on people by dogs in each of the last five years for which figures are available; how many of these resulted in hospital treatment; and how many resulted in death.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the incidence of injury to humans caused by attacks by dogs during each of the last five years; and what information he can provide on the breeds of dogs involved.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold *[holding answer 20 May 1991]:* As there is no requirement to report a dog attack, or injuries caused by dog attacks, statistics on them are not collected centrally. In the last year to May 1991, the number of incidents recorded in London by the Metropolitan police were as follows:

	Number
German Shepherds (Alsatians)	200
Pit bull terriers	126
Rottweilers	109
Staffordshire bull terriers	43
Undefined cross-breeds	38
Dobermann pinschers	33
English bull terriers	27
Labradors	23
Collies	13
Jack Russell terriers	6
Greyhounds	6
Yorkshire terriers	3
Great Dane	1
Husky	1
Irish wolf hound	1
Rhodesian Ridgeback	1
Total	631

SCOTLAND

Ambulances (Accident/Emergency Journeys)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time taken for an accident/emergency patient to be taken by ambulance from East Lothian to Edinburgh royal infirmary; what is the average daily number of such journeys; and whether any patients have died doing such journeys since the closure of the Roodlands casualty unit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On average, 45 minutes and nine journeys each day. Roodlands casualty unit did not treat patients suffering major trauma or life-threatening conditions and such patients were always conveyed to Edinburgh. There has been no change therefore in the journey time for such patients. The Scottish ambulance service has no evidence that any patient has died because of the journey time to hospital.

Local Government

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations he has received about the proposals for change in local government;

(2) if he will make a further statement on his proposals for a new structure for local government.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to the reply given by my right hon. Friend on 15 May. A consultation paper setting out the case for change and the principles to be applied in moving towards a single-tier system of local government throughout Scotland will be issued shortly.

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what future role he proposes for Strathclyde regional council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As the hon. Member knows, the existing system of local government in Scotland is under review. My right hon. Friend will be issuing a consultation paper on the structure of local government in Scotland shortly. Strathclyde regional council, together with other councils and interested organisations, will be invited to comment.

Green Belt

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the percentage of land designated as green-belt areas in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Renfrew district.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The percentages of land designated as green belt in the areas mentioned are:

	per cent.
Scotland	1·7
Strathclyde	7·5
Renfrew	78·3

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the criteria used to designate green belt land in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The criteria for the designation of green belt land are set out in SDD circular 24/1985. It is for local plans to establish the exact boundaries of green belts within the strategic framework set by the circular and structure plan policies.

Drinking Water

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of nitrates recorded in Scottish drinking water in each of the last 20 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested. Nitrate levels in drinking water differ from one supply to another and may vary seasonally. Surveys carried out in 1975 and 1985 showed that only a very small percentage of the total number of Scottish supply sources contained more than 25 mg of nitrate per litre. Eight of the 12 Scottish water authorities reported that no sources exceeded that figure. All water put into supply was within the EC limit of 50 mg per litre. In 1990 a few small rural supplies were recorded as occasionally exceeding this limit. In these cases nitrate levels are being reduced by blending with other water until the sources can be replaced. Information on nitrate levels in individual supply zones is included in the public records of water quality which water authorities have been required to maintain since 1 July 1990.

Operations

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many operations were cancelled or postponed by Scottish health boards in each month from January 1990 to March 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Disability

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are registered *(a)* blind, *(b)* deaf or *(c)* disabled in (i) Scotland, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Renfrew district.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local authorities in Scotland are required to inform themselves of the number of chronically sick and disabled people in their areas but are not required to, and in practice do not, keep registers for this purpose. They do, however, receive information on the number of blind persons voluntarily registered either with local societies for blind people or with the local authorities themselves. The number of blind persons so recorded at 31 March 1990 was 6,709 in Strathclyde, and 14,120 in Scotland. I have no information in respect of Renfrew district.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the mean salary of disabled adults in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* There is no information available on the mean salary of disabled adults in Scotland. The survey "Disabled people in the labour market" conducted on behalf of the Employment Service by Social and Community Planning Research Ltd. and published in report "Employment and Handicap" in June 1990 showed that in Great Britain as a whole in 1989 the median earnings of people with disabilities was in the range £150 to £199 per week. The survey cannot provide a reliable estimate for Scotland.

Paisley, North

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are over the age of 18 years in the constituency of Paisley, North.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Whisky

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of people employed in the manufacture and distribution of Scotch whisky in each of the last three years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Employment figures are available for plants manufacturing Scotch whisky as their principal product. No separate figures are available for transport services relating to just the whisky industry.

The table shows manufacturing employment in the whisky and other related industries in Scotland in plants employing 11 or more employees in 1987, 1988 and 1989, the latest year for which figures are available.

Manufacturing employment in the whisky and other related industries

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Scotland	11,000	10,600	10,200

Source: The Scottish Office Industry Department. Regional Data System.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss employment levels in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has arranged to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress General Council on 26 July to discuss economic and other issues.

Education (Early Leavers)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is for each year since 1974 the number of students in *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* higher education in Scotland who left their respective courses before completion; and if he will give in each case the respective percentages for males and females.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* This information is not held centrally.

Child Immunisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will set up a joint working party with the British Medical Association in Scotland to review the impact of the new child immunisation targets in GP contracts on small rural practices; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will now consider allowing an element of discretion in the setting of immunisation targets for children in small practices which find it impossible to meet the current target levels in the new GP contract;

(3) how many representations he has received from small GP practices which are unable to reach immunisation targets for children because of the small number of children suitable for vaccination in their patient lists.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* These matters are governed by the statement of fees and allowances, the terms of which are negotiated with the profession on a Great Britain basis. The health departments are at present reviewing a number of detailed aspects of the GP contract, in consultation with the profession, with the aim of improving still further the quality of general medical services. Against this background, I see no need for a joint working party on this specific issue.

My Department can trace only one such representation, made before the implementation of the new contract.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by location, the proposed 6,000 drill holes he has authorised the nuclear industry to make in Caithness, in respect of ascertaining a suitable site for a nuclear waste dump; when he expects them to report their findings; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1991]:* The exact location of any shot holes, up to the maximum of 6,000 granted planning permission by my right hon. Friend, is an operational matter for the chairman of UK Nirex Ltd. He wrote to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 13 May on this subject and I have placed a copy of his letter in the Library of the House. UK Nirex expects to identify its preferred site for a repository later this year.

Planning

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the planning powers of new town development corporations to be transferred to district councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* The Scottish new town development corporations, apart from Glenrothes, exercise certain planning powers under special development orders. It is the Government's intention, as stated in the White Paper "The Scottish New Towns—The Way Ahead" that these orders will be revoked at the time of dissolution of each development corporation. Each new town will then become integrated into the normal planning system.

Education

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* for each regional council area *(a)* the total money allocated for the implementation of the five to 14 years curriculum and testing in (i) training of staff and (ii) introductory and closure day courses for staff and what were the full costs of full implementation, *(b)* the total money allocated to appoint development officers for five to 14 years development and for development planning and information technology officers and what were the estimated costs for full implementation, *(c)* how many and what percentage of head teachers will be granted additional

relief to cope with developments of the five to 14 years curriculum and testing and *(d)* what increase in per capita allowances for 1991-92 have been allocated per pupil.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* The cost of the five to 14 development programme has been met almost entirely by central Government, either directly or through support for work carried out by the primary assessment unit in the Scottish Examination Board, and by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum and the colleges of education; expenditure on the programme in 1990-91 was over £2 million, and will be at the same level in the current year.

In addition specific grant is paid at a level of 75 per cent. against expenditure by authorities on in-service teacher training for the five to 14 programme.

Per capita allowances and other forms of support for individual schools are a matter for education authorities themselves; information on these is not held centrally.

General Government support to local authorities in the form of aggregate Exchequer finance was increased for 1991-92 by 10·5 per cent. over the level in the previous year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Paisley, North

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents receive income support in the constituency of Paisley, North.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents in receipt of child benefit there are in the constituency of Paisley North.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Benefits (Guidelines)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines he has issued to the benefits agency on the balance between maintaining the level of service to the public and cost-cutting exercises.

Miss Widdecombe: The balance between service delivery and cost is achieved through the process of agreeing aims, objectives and targets. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed the aims, objectives and targets for 1991-92 with the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. These are set out in the agency's business plan which is published and available in the Library. The targets cover service delivery, efficiency, budgetary performance and customer satisfaction.

Family Credit

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average delay that a claimant for family credit experiences between applying for the benefit and receiving an award; how many claimants there are for family credit; and what measures are proposed to improve service to the low paid and people in need.

Mr. Jack: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Community Care Grant

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines exist for the degree of priority to be given to young people leaving homeless hostels, for social fund community care grant purposes; and what study he has made of the practice of his Department's Keighley, Halifax and Skipton offices in this regard.

Mr. Scott: The guidance issued by the Secretary of State referring to social fund payments is set out in the "Social Fund Manual", a copy of which is in the Library. The Department's district office managers also have responsibility to issue guidance that reflects local needs. A social fund officer is not bound by the guidance issued by the Secretary of State or the district manager. He may exercise his own judgment in the priority of a particular application if the circumstances dictate.

The Department's former offices at Keighley, Halifax and Skipton now form the Benefit Agency's Halifax district. No formal local study of social fund operations has taken place since the new Halifax district was formed in April 1991, but production and monitoring of local guidance is a continuous process for which the district office manager is responsible.

DEFENCE

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details and dates in each year since 1989 when the Household Cavalry participated in foxhunting or deer hunting and with which hunts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details and dates in each year since 1989 when members of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment took part in fox hunting are set out in the table. No additional costs to public funds were incurred as a result of this activity.

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment has not participated in any deer hunt since 1989.

Date	*Quorn Hunt*	*Belvoir Hunt*	*Cottesmore Hunt*
October 1989	4	2	1
November 1989	8	9	2
December 1989	9	8	—
January 1990	8	8	5
February 1990	7	8	3
March 1990	1	1	—
September 1990	—	2	—
October 1990	9	9	2
November 1990	6	6	3
December 1990	4	5	2
January 1991	6	5	—
February 1991	6	5	—
March 1991	—	1	—

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision is made for members of the armed forces, in non-mounted units, to hunt in duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel in non-mounted units are not normally permitted to hunt in duty hours. However, in exceptional circumstances and at the commanding officer's discretion it may be permitted provided there is no detriment to military tasks.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what provision is made for members of the armed forces to hunt in duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Members of mounted regiments and other military personnel who have an official requirement to ride are authorised to ride during duty hours as a means of acquiring or perfecting equestrian skills. They may participate in a range of equestrian activities including hunting.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether army personnel are permitted to use Ministry of Defence equipment in off-duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Army personnel are permitted to use MOD equipment in off-duty hours normally on payment of hire charges.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of transporting horses and riders to hunting meets in each year since 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The costs of transporting horses and riders to hunting meets cannot be readily identified. Where horses are used by Army personnel for hunting outside normal duty, the transport costs fall to the individual.

Tanks

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when his Department will announce a decision on the replacement for the Chieftain as the main battle tank for the British Army.

(2) what has caused the delay by his Department in reaching a decision on selecting a replacement for the Chieftain as the main battle tank for the British Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: As I told the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 4 June 1991, *Official Report*, Volume 192, columns *142-43*, a wide range of factors has to be taken into account in reaching a decision as important as that on the equipment for our future main battle tank fleet. It is our intention to make a further announcement before the end of this month.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what account he will take of the likely employment consequences in the British defence industry in making his decision on the replacement main battle tank for the British Army;

(2) what account he will take of the potential value to the British defence industry of export orders for the Vickers Challenger 2 in making his decision on the replacement main battle tank for the British Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: All relevant factors will be taken into account.

Radio Mast, Coney Weston

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose he is to erect at Coney Weston, Suffolk, a 100 ft tall radio mast and related buildings; what consultations he has had with local authorities and environmental bodies about the siting of the tower; when he intends to construct it; and how much it will cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 30 m high tower we propose to construct at Coney Weston, Suffolk, is part of the Royal Air Force's advanced communications system known as the Boxer network. There has been full consultation with the local planning authority and a notice of proposed development submitted for consideration. We propose to commence construction of the tower later this year. It is not our practice to disclose details of individual costs which are commercial-in-confidence.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the United Kingdom is involved in the high-altitude endoatmospheric defence interceptor programme;

(2) whether the United Kingdom is involved in the development of the theatre high altitude defence system;

(3) whether the United Kingdom is involved in the extended range interceptor system for short-range defence;

(4) whether the United Kingdom is involved in the ground-based surveillance and tracking system;

(5) whether the United Kingdom is involved in the ground-based free electron laser programme in collaboration with the United States of America.

Mr. Alan Clark: All the systems referred to are elements of the United States strategic defence initiative programme. British firms and other institutions are given opportunities in all areas of the SDI programme.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the capability of the Soviet Union to dismantle withdrawn warheads and to manage and recycle the nuclear materials arising.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union does not reveal what it does with the nuclear materials arising from withdrawn nuclear warheads. However, it would almost certainly have the capability to dismantle warheads and recycle the nuclear materials arising for either civil or military purposes.

BNFL (Security Vetting)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department plays any role in the security vetting of applicants for work with British Nuclear Fuels plc in respect of his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No.

Kuwait Oil Fires

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his oral answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column 137, what advice he has received on the lung function of service personnel in the area of the oil fires in Kuwait and from which experts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The monitoring of the lung function of our personnel is undertaken by our medical team in Kuwait, together with a military public health physician.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now seek information about the lung conditions of dissected sheep in Kuwait.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The presence of atmospheric pollutants in Kuwait is well known and effective measures are therefore in place to monitor the health of our personnel.

Service Personnel and Ministry Staff

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* departmental civilians in each of the regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest available figures are given in the table on page 32 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990, volume 2.

Infantry Training

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many man training days infantry battalions are allocated on average for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* I am unable to provide the information requested without incurring disproportionate costs, but my hon. Friend may find it helpful to know that average man training day allocations for TA independent units were 40 for 1990-91 and 36 for 1991-92.

EMPLOYMENT

Vocational Qualifications

15. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made towards the introduction of comprehensive national vocational qualifications.

Mr. Jackson: Progress in developing a national framework of standards-based vocational qualifications relevant to the needs of the modern workplace has been good. This far-reaching reform is being led by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, which has been set the target of completing the framework of reformed qualifications to cover 80 per cent. of the work force by the end of 1992. At present almost 300 NVQs are available to around one third of the work force in over 40 major industries.

Comparable progress has been made in producing equivalent Scottish vocational qualifications.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what has been the annual budget of the standards branch of the training, enterprises and education department since the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the annual grand totals of budgets for the industry lead bodies currently engaged in drafting competences, from the date of their establishment, the standards branch of the training, enterprise and education department since the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, since its establishment, as an annual percentage of the work-related further education budget administered by the training, enterprise and education department in each relevant year; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the industry lead bodies currently engaged in drafting competences and their associated criteria as the basis for national vocational qualifications; what was the date of the establishment of each industry lead body; and what have been their individual budgets from the date of their establishment;

(4) if he will publish the annual budget of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications since its establishment; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will place in the Library a copy of the report entitled "Knowledge and Competence", commissioned by the standards branch of the training, enterprise and education department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was established in 1986 to reform the national framework of vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its key target is to produce national vocational qualifications (NVQs) to cover 80 per cent. of the work force by the end of 1992. The grant-in-aid budgets which have been made available to NCVQ by the Employment Department since 1986-87 to undertake this work are as follows:

	£
1986-87	520,000
1987-88	3,708,698
1988-89	3,750,000
1989-90	3,000,000
1990-91	2,621,000
1991-92	3,700,000

The Employment Department's standards programme has provided pump-priming funding since 1987-88 to assist in the development of standards that form the basis of NVQs, and comparable Scottish vocational qualifications (SVQs) in Scotland. These standards are developed through 160 employer-led lead bodies. The annual budgets of the standards programme since 1987-88 are as follows:

	£
1987-88	2,086,000
1988-89	3,000,000
1989-90	6,700,000
1990-91	8,911,000
1991-92	9,077,000

The standards programme is administered separately from and is not part of the Employment Department's work-related further education budget, which is £6,633,000 for 1991-92. Figures are not kept centrally for the budgets of lead bodies, which are employer-led and funded. The Employment Department generally funds up to 50 per cent. of the costs of developing standards in particular industries. Total budgets of lead bodies are therefore well in excess of the standards programme budgets. A list of the industry lead bodies which are currently engaged in drafting competences and their associated criteria as the basis for national vocational qualifications is given in section 2 of the Employment Department's publication "The Standards Digest", a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library. Lead bodies progressively came into existence. Section 3 of "The Standards Digest" details when lead bodies started work on developing standards.

The Employment Department's report "Knowledge and Competence: Current Issues in Training and Education" forms part of the technical guidance made available to those who are concerned with developing standards for competence-based vocational qualifications. I am arranging for a copy of this report to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on unemployment in southern England.

Mr. Jackson: The seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in April 1991 for the south-east, south-west and East Anglia regions were 6·3 per cent., 6·8 per cent. and 5·5 per cent. of the work force respectively. This compares with 7·6 per cent. for the United Kingdom.

22. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current average unemployment level in the Northern region.

Mr. Jackson: In April 1991, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the Northern region was 10.0 per cent.

Channel Tunnel

19. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the employment implications for the north-east of the completion of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Forth: The channel tunnel should benefit the economy and employment prospects of the United Kingdom generally. I am sure that companies and individuals in the north-east will take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the tunnel.

Manual Handling

20. **Mr Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Health and Safety Commission when the subject of manual handling was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No discussions have been held with the Health and Safety Commission on this subject in recent years. However, I am aware that the Commission is developing proposals for regulations to implement a European directive on the minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk, particularly of back injury to workers. The directive must be implemented by 31 December 1992 and I understand that the Commission is planning to issue a consultative document containing its proposals for regulations and associated guidance later this year.

Training and Enterprise Councils

21. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the involvement in training and enterprise councils of those engaged in running small businesses.

Mr. Forth: When TECs become operational my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State ensures that each TEC board has at least one director with experience of running a small business.

Over 100 TEC directors are from companies which have 30 or fewer employees. TECs have drawn up imaginative plans for helping small businesses to prosper and grow.

23. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress in setting up TECs.

Mr. Howard: Excellent progress is being made in setting up training and enterprise councils. All 82 TECs in England and Wales are now in place, with 75 fully operational. The whole network will be operational later this year, nearly two years ahead of schedule.

Young Employees (Training)

24. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is undertaking to encourage businesses to provide training opportunities for employees aged 16 to 19 years.

Mr. Howard: The Government have introduced a wide range of measures to businesses to train their 16 to 19-year-old employees. In particular, YT encourages employers to offer high-quality training. The comprehensive proposals in the recent White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" are designed further to increase training opportunities for young people, particularly through the nationwide extension of training credits, the expansion of the compacts approach and improvements to the qualifications system. We are also setting a new standard—"Investors in People"—for the development of all workers, including young employees.

Disabled People

25. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to develop new initiatives to assist people with disabilities into jobs.

Mr. Jackson: Last year's consultative document contained proposals for such initiatives. We have received many comments about ways in which we could improve the effectiveness of the help that we give to people with disabilities who want jobs. We have announced some of our decisions already and others will follow.

Compacts

26. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the compacts initiative.

Mr. Howard: The compacts initiative has been a success in urban programme areas and I have recently announced that the compact approach should now be extended across the whole country.

It will be for the local partners, including training and enterprise councils, employers and schools to decide how best to take forward compacts in their own areas.

Manufacturing Industry (Job Losses)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what have been the job losses in manufacturing industry during the last three months, six months, 12 months and 18 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The number of employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Great Britain at March 1991 has fallen by:

	Number
last 3 months	97,000
last 6 months	169,000
last 12 months	209,000
last 18 months	237,000

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of loans, the total sums outstanding and the average size of loan outstanding in each year since 1981 under the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Forth: The number of loans currently outstanding is 11,310, but this cannot be broken down by year. Information on sums outstanding and average size of loan outstanding are commercial details between lenders and borrowers and not available to the Department.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the premiums for the guarantees issued under the loan guarantee scheme in each year since 1981, the income derived from the payment of such premiums and such income net of defaults in each year since 1981.

Mr. Forth: The premium rates for guarantees issued under the loan guarantee scheme are:

	Per cent.
1981 to May 1984	3·0
June 1984 to March 1986	5·0
April 1986 to date	2·5

For loans within inner city task force areas, introduced in June 1988, the premium rate is 2·0 per cent. (2·5 per cent. to March 1990).

Information on income prior to the Department of Employment becoming responsible for the scheme is not available. For subsequent years income derived from premia payments was:

	£ million
1985-86	5·4
1986-87	3·8
1987-88	2·9
1988-89	2·6
1989-90	2·8
1990-91	3·3

The net cost of the scheme has been:

	£ million
1985-86	27·1
1986-87	11·2
1987-88	3·6
1988-89	3·8
1989-90	5·6
1990-91	16·5

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if will list by district the total number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Excutive in each year since 1986-87.

Mr. Forth: Health and Safety Executive's field inspectors are based in network of area offices, with the exception of mines inspectors who are organised by districts. The available information for the 1 April each year is given in

Table A—Inspectors based in Areas;
Table B—Inspectors based in Districts;
Table C—Inspectors HQ-based.

Table A

Area	*Year* 1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
01 South West	45·0	45·0	42·5	43·0	45·0	46·0
02 South	37·5	37·5	34·5	32·0	34·0	37·5
03 South East	45·5	47·0	47·0	45·5	47·0	46·0
05 London North	35·5	34·0	33·0	32·5	30·5	32·5
06 London South	35·0	34·0	37·0	39·0	38·5	38·5
07 East Anglia	41·0	31·5	28·5	31·5	32·0	35·5
08 North Home Counties	49·0	47·5	44·5	42·5	44·5	44·5
09 East Midlands	34·0	34·0	33·5	35·0	37·0	41·5
10 West Midlands	51·0	47·0	44·0	42·0	44·5	50·5
11 Wales	52·0	50·0	46·5	46·0	50·0	53·0
12 Marches	36·5	35·5	35·0	36·5	43·5	39·5
13 North Midlands	36·0	34·0	32·0	35·0	38·0	42·0
14 South Yorkshire and Humberside	32·5	31·0	28·0	33·0	34·0	36·5
15 West and North Yorkshire	59·0	52·5	52·0	50·0	56·0	59·0
16 Greater Manchester	39·0	42·5	40·0	37·5	42·0	47·0
17 Merseyside	35·0	31·0	29·5	28·0	33·0	37·0
18 North West	34·0	30·0	27·0	34·5	35·5	33·5
19 North East	36·0	35·0	28·5	28·5	34·5	38·0
20 Scotland East	42·0	46·0	45·5	46·5	53·5	55·0
21 Scotland West	31·0	32·0	33·0	28·5	27·5	35·0
Total	806·5	777·0	741·5	747·0	800·5	848·0

Notes:
1. Figures include factory, agriculture and specialist inspectors based at field consultant groups for all years.
2. 1986 figures also include field-based industrial air pollution inspectors.
3. 1990 and 1991 figures include field-based quarries inspectors who transferred to the factory and agricultural division in October 1989.
4. 1991 figures include field-based railway inspectors following the transfer of the Railway Inspectorate from the Department of Transport in December 1990.

Table B

District	*Year*					
	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Scottish and North Eastern	7 5	7 6	10	10	2	2
North Yorkshire	9	7	7	9	6	6
South Yorkshire	8	8	6	6	6	6
North Midlands	8	10	7	9	6	6
Western and South Eastern	8 9	9 10	9 8	9	7	7
Southern Western	10	11	11	10	7	6
Total	64	68	58	53	34	33

Notes:
1. Pre 1990 figures are for field-based Mines and Quarries Inspectors.
2. Figures for 1990 and 1991 are for Mines Inspectors only, following the transfer of the Quarries Inspectorate to the Factory and Agricultural Division in October 1989.
3. The table shows that the Scottish and North Eastern and Western and South Eastern District offices amalgamated. District boundaries were also changed.

Table C

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
HQ-based inspectors	361·0	359·5	365·5	382·5	404·5	460·0
Total HSE inspectors	1,231·5	1,204·5	1,165·0	1,182·5	1,239·0	1,341·0

Notes:
1. HQ-based inspectors include those on non-inspection duties eg. management, policy or technical standards work etc.
2. Nuclear Installations Inspectors are HQ-based. Their site inspections and visits are organised and carried out from HQ.
3. Offshore Safety inspectors are based at HQ buildings and at Aberdeen and Great Yarmouth.

National Record of Achievement

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the introduction of the national record of achievement.

Mr. Jackson: The national record of achievement (NRA) was launched on 27 February. It presents a simple record in summary form of an individual's achievement throughout education, training and working life. The NRA is an important step in motivating individuals to continue with their learning throughout life. To date, more than 1·3 million copies of the NRA have been ordered by schools, colleges and employers.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 12 June 1991

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Pay

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *50*, on expenditure on university pay, if he will break down the figure for other staff between *(a)* manual and ancillary workers, *(b)* clerical and certain related administrative staff and *(c)* technical staff, and express each as a percentage of the total universities general recurrent expenditure in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The available information is as follows:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Secretarial and Clerical (£m)	185·3	189·0	190·2	194·2
Per cent.	7·3	7·3	7·2	7·2
Technical (£m)	218·4	216·6	210·3	205·5
Per cent.	8·6	8·4	8·0	7·6
Other staff (£m)	126·6	126·3	122·1	121·9
Per cent.	5·0	4·9	4·6	4·5

Notes:
Expenditure is at 1990-91 prices, derived using GDP deflator assumptions based on the university academic year.
Percentages are of United Kingdom universities' total recurrent expenditure from general funds.

Student Accommodation

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, if he will indicate the number of students resident in college accommodation in each university; and what percentage of the total they represented in 1990 in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* England.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information on the number of students resident in college accommodation in each university is contained in "University Statistics—Volume 3—Finance". The latest available information is for 1988-89. A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

School Buildings

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out, at 1990 prices, the level of capital spending on school buildings for the latest available year for *(a)* Berkshire, *(b)* Essex, *(c)* Hereford and Worcester, *(d)* Nottinghamshire and *(e)* Somerset.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested, which has become available only since my earlier reply of 4 June, is as follows:

Local education authority	*1990-91 prices £ million*
Berkshire	[1] 21·8
Essex	[1] 28·3
Hereford and Worcester	[2] 8·4
Nottinghamshire	[1] 9·2
Somerset	[2] 5·8

[1] 1989-90 prices.
[2] 1988-89 prices.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how much is spent *(a)* by the University of Wales as a whole and *(b)* by each constituent college on Welsh medium teaching; what percentage of overall expenditure this accounts for; and if he will also publish figures for each year since 1980.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not collected centrally.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the names, location and local education authority of *(a)* each grant-maintained school and *(b)* each school which is balloting on, or awaiting a decision about, grant-maintained status, grouping the schools by education authority and by standard region.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Operating and approved grant-maintained schools by region and local education authority

Greater London	
Hendon School, Hendon	Barnet
Queen Elizabeth's GM School for Boys, Barnet	Barnet
Claremont High School, Kenton	Brent
Bullers Wood School for Girls, Chislehurst	Bromley
London Oratory School, Hammersmith	Hammersmith
Bishopshalt School, Hillingdon	Hillingdon
Haydon School, Pinner	Hillingdon
Queensmead School, South Ruislip	Hillingdon
Vyners School, Ickenham	Hillingdon
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, Kensington	Kensington
Stratford School, Forest Gate	Newham
London Nautical School, Blackfriars	Southwark
Nonsuch High School for Girls, Cheam	Sutton
Wilsons School, Wallington	Sutton
South East	
Reading School	Berkshire
Southlands School, Reading	Berkshire
St. Bartholomew's School, Newbury	Berkshire
Beaconsfield High School, Beaconsfield	Buckinghamshire
Bridgewater Hall School, Milton Keynes	Buckinghamshire
Brindley Hall School, Milton Keynes	Buckinghamshire
Hardley Secondary School, Fawley	Hampshire
Burgate School, Fordingbridge	Hampshire
The GS For Girls Wilmington, Nr. Dartford	Kent
The Cornwallis School, Linton	Kent
The Maplesden Noakes School, Maidstone	Kent
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys, Dartford	Kent
St. George's CE School, Gravesend	Kent
Guildford County School	Surrey

South West	
Beechen Cliff School, Bath	Avon
Oldfield School, Bath	Avon
Colyton Grammar School, Colyford	Devon
Bournemouth Grammar School	Dorset
Woodroffe School, Lyme Regis	Dorset
Ribston Hall High School, Gloucester	Gloucestershire
Stroud High School	Gloucestershire
Marling School, Stroud	Gloucestershire
Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham	Gloucestershire
Sexey's School, Bruton	Somerset
St. Augustine RC School, Trowbridge	Wiltshire
East Anglia	
Queensbury School, Dunstable	Bedfordshire
Chalvedon School, Basildon	Essex
Westcliff High School for Boys, Westcliff	Essex
Rickmansworth School	Hertfordshire
Watford Boys Grammar School	Hertfordshire
Francis Bacon School, St. Albans	Hertfordshire
Caistor School, Caistor	Lincolnshire
Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School, Alford	Lincolnshire
Skegness Grammar School, Skegness	Lincolnshire
The Kings School Grantham, Grantham	Lincolnshire
Carre's Grammar School, Sleaford	Lincolnshire
St. George's School, Sleaford	Lincolnshire
King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth	Lincolnshire
Wymondham College, Morley	Norfolk
Midlands	
Baverstock Grant-Maintained School, Kings Heath	Birmingham
Small Heath School, Small Heath	Birmingham
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys	Birmingham
Great Barr School, Great Barr	Birmingham
Ecclesbourne School, Duffield	Derbyshire
Netherthorpe School, Stavely	Derbyshire
Old Swinford Hospital, Stourbridge	Dudley
Long Field High School, Melton Mowbray	Leicestershire
Kingswood School, Corby	Northamptonshire
Kingsley Park Middle School	Northamptonshire
Southfield School for Girls, Kettering	Northamptonshire
Manor High School, Wednesbury	Sandwell
Adams' Grammar School, Newport	Shropshire
Wolverhampton High School for Girls	Wolverhampton
Moseley Park School, Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton
Newbold Grange High School, Rugby	Warwickshire
North West	
St. James' CE School, Farnworth	Bolton
Bankfield High School, Widnes	Cheshire
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, Rossendale	Lancashire
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	Lancashire
Lancaster Girls Grammar School	Lancashire
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, Clitheroe	Lancashire
St. Francis Xavier's College, Woolton	Liverpool
Audenshaw High School, Manchester	Tameside
Northern	
Bingley Grammar School, Bingley	Bradford
Crossley Heath School, Halifax	Calderdale
North Halifax High School, Illingworth	Calderdale
Kirkbie Kendal School, Kendal	Cumbria
Heckmondwike Grammar School, Heckmondwike	Kirklees
Castle Hall Grant-Maintained School, Mirfield	Kirklees

(b) Schools by region and local education authority which: have applied for grant-maintained status; or, are committed to apply following a ballot in favour of seeking grant-maintained status; or, are committed to ballot on grant-maintained status.

Greater London	
St. Paul's CE Primary School, Barnet	Barnet
Copland Community School, Wembley	Brent
William Gladstone School, Parkside	Brent
Cator Park School, Beckingham	Bromley
Crofton Junior School, Orpington	Bromley
Newstead Wood School, Orpington	Bromley
Beaverwood School for Girls, Chislehurst	Bromley
Coopers School, Chislehurst	Bromley
Langley Park Boys School, Bromley	Bromley
Ravens Wood School, Bromley	Bromley
Kelsey Park School, Bromley	Bromley
Hayes School, Hayes	Bromley
Riddlesdown High School, Purley	Croydon
Drayton Manor High School, Hanwell	Ealing
Northolt High School, Northolt	Ealing
Wood End First School, Northolt	Ealing
Ellen Wilkinson School, Acton	Ealing
Wood End Middle School, Northolt	Ealing
Greenford High School, Greenford	Ealing
Walford High School, Ealing	Ealing
Brentside High School, Hanwell	Ealing
Harwood School, Fulham	Hammersmith
Nower Hill High School, Pinner	Harrow
Barnhill Comprehensive School, Hayes	Hillingdon
Greenway Comprehensive School, Uxbridge	Hillingdon
Townmead School, West Drayton	Hillingdon
Northwood School, Northwood	Hillingdon
Hayes Manor School, Hayes	Hillingdon
Mellow Lane School, Hayes End	Hillingdon
La Retraite School, Lambeth	Lambeth
Turnham Junior School, Lewisham	Lewisham
John Fisher School, Purley	Sutton
Raines Foundation School	Tower Hamlets
Highams Park School	Waltham Forest
Graveney School, Tooting	Wandsworth
Burntwood School for Girls, Wandsworth	Wandsworth
Ethelburga JMI School, Wandsworth	Wandsworth
South East	
Langley Grammar School, Slough	Berkshire
Deanefield School, Reading	Berkshire
Brookmead First and Middle School, Ivinghoe	Buckinghamshire
Arnewood School, New Milton	Hampshire
Ringwood Comprehensive School, ringwood	Hampshire
Swanscombe High School, Swanscombe	Kent
Thamesview School, Gravesend	Kent
Homewood School, Tenterden	Kent
Cliffe Woods Middle School, Rochester	Kent
Dartford Grammar School, West Hill	Kent
Southlands Comprehensive School, New Romney	Kent
Appledore CE Primary School, Ashford	Kent
Aylsford School, Aylsford	Kent
Oakwood Park Grammar School, Maidstone	Kent
Edenbridge Middle School, Edenbridge	Kent
Dartford Grammar School for Girls, Dartford	Kent
Wrotham School, Wrotham	Kent
Cliffe Woods Primary School, Rochester	Kent
Sheppey School, Sheerness	Kent
Senacre High School, Maidstone	Kent
The Skinner's School, Tunbridge Wells	Kent
Simon Langton Boys' Grammar School, Canterbury	Kent
Snodland CE Primary School, Snodland	Kent
Oldborough Manor High, Maidstone	Kent
Brockhill Park School, Saltwood	Kent
Cranbrook School, Cranbrook	Kent
St. Peter's Primary School, Tonbridge	Kent

Rainham Mark Grammar School, Gillingham	Kent
St. John the Baptist School, Woking	Surrey
de Stafford School, Caterham	Surrey
Send C of E First School, Send	Surrey
Collingwood School, Camberley	Surrey
Manor County First School Byfleet	Surrey
Glyn School, Epsom	Surrey
Hawkedale First School, Sunbury-on-Thames	Surrey
Gordon's School, Woking	Surrey
Heathside Secondary School, Weybridge	Surrey
Stoneleigh First School, Ewell	Surrey
Ashley County First School, Walton-on-Thames	Surrey
South Holmwood CE First School, South Holmwood	Surrey
Epsom and Ewell High School, Epsom	Surrey
South West	
Desborough Comprehensive School, Maidenhead	Berkshire
Boyton County Primary School, Boyton	Cornwall
Foster's Boys Grammar School, Yeovil	Dorset
Lord Digby's Girls Grammar School, Sherborne	Dorset
Budmouth School, Weymouth	Dorset
Parkstone Grammar School, Poole	Dorset
The Crypt School, Gloucester	Gloucestershire
Neroche Primary School, Ilminster	Somerset
East Anglia	
St. Helen's Primary School, Bluntisham	Cambridgeshire
Gamlingay Village College, Gamlingay	Cambridgeshire
Newborough Primary School, Newborough	Cambridgeshire
The Plume School, Maldon	Essex
The Park School, Rayleigh	Essex
Elmbridge School, Ongar	Essex
King John School, Benfleet	Essex
The Philip Morant School, Colchester	Essex
Elmwood County Primary School, South Woodham Ferrers	Essex
Watford Girls' Grammar School	Hertfordshire
Parmiters School, Watford	Hertfordshire
St. Mary's RC Primary School, Royston	Hertfordshire
Christ Church CE JMI School, Chorleywood	Hertfordshire
Monksmead First School, Borehamwood	Hertfordshire
Nascot Wood School, Watford	Hertfordshire
Magdalen CE/Meth Primary School, Wainfleet	Lincolnshire
Bourne Primary School, Bourne	Lincolnshire
Yarborough High School, Lincoln	Lincolnshire
Christ's Hospital School, Lincoln	Lincolnshire
Castle Hills School, Gainsborough	Lincolnshire
William Alvey Junior School, Sleaford	Lincolnshire
North Rauceby School, North Rauceby	Lincolnshire
Gartree School, Tattershall	Lincolnshire
Redgate Middle School, Hustanton	Norfolk
Heacham Middle School, King's Lynn	Norfolk
Norwich Road First School, Thetford	Norfolk
Loddon Middle School, Loddon	Norfolk
The Admiral's Middle School, Thetford	Norfolk
Dereham Church First School, Dereham	Norfolk
Downham Market High School, Downham Market	Norfolk
Gresham Primary School, Gresham	Norfolk
Midlands	
Sir Wilfred Martineau School, Birmingham	Birmingham
Silverhill Primary School, Mickleover	Derbyshire
Borrow Wood Junior School, Spondon	Derbyshire
Bishop Stopford School, Kettering	Northamptonshire
Bliss Charity Primary School, Neither Heyford	Northamptonshire
Moulton Primary School, Moulton	Northamptonshire
King John Middle School, Mansfield	Northamptonshire
High Oakham Middle School, Mansfield	Nottinghamshire
Windmill Ridge School, Mansfield	Nottinghamshire
Ravensdale Middle School, Mansfield	Nottinghamshire
Ellerdine Primary School, Cold Hatton	Shropshire
The Down Primary School, Bridgnorth	Shropshire
Hatchford Junior and Infant School, Chelmsly Wood	Solihull
Tudor Grange School, Solihull	Solihull
St. Thomas More RC High School, Stoke	Staffordshire
Belmont Primary School, Stoke	Staffordshire
Exhall School, Ash Green	Warwickshire
Hartshill School, Nuneaton	Warwickshire
Rokeby Middle School, Rugby	Warwickshire
Darlaston Community School, Wednesbury	Walsall
North-West	
Kettleshulme C of E Primary School, Kettleshulme	Cheshire
Arley Primary School, Northwich	Cheshire
Newton C of E School, Newton	Lancashire
Ormskirk Grammar School, Ormskirk	Lancashire
Crossgates Primary School, Rochdale	Rochdale
Northern	
Wortley CE J and I School, Wortley	Barnsley
Salterlee J and I School, Halifax	Calderdale
Hassall Green Methodist Primary School, Sandbach	Cheshire
Bowness-on-Solway Primary School, Bowness-on-Solway	Cumbria
Eden School, Carlisle	Cumbria
Queen Elizabeth School, Penrith	Cumbria
St. Aidan's School, Carlisle	Cumbria
King James I Comprehensive School, Bishop Auckland	Durham
Wold Newton Primary School, Wold Newton	Humberside
Woolley CE First School, Woolley	Wakefield
Romanby County Primary School	North Yorkshire

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what procedure he expects to use in order to determine the teachers' pay increases for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Subject to parliamentary approval of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill, my right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be in a position to ask the School Teachers' Review Body to recommend a settlement for 1992-93.

University Funding

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider his recent decision not to meet employers and employees of British universities to discuss funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. For the second year running, there has been an increase of some 10 per cent. in the public funding for universities. My right hon. and learned Friend has made clear that it is now for the employers to reach a pay settlement within the aggregate resources at their disposal.

Cash Limits (Science)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any changes to announce to cash limits on his Department's Science Vote for 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XI, vote 5, science will be amended. The cash limit change is as follows:

Class and vote	*Current cash limit* £	*Change* £	*Revised cash limit* £
XI.5	920,455,000	7,000,000	927,455,000

The additional funds will provide for the following additional allocations to the research councils in 1991-92.

	£ million
Agricultural and Food Research Council	1·05
Economic and Social Research Council	0·10
Medical Research Council	1·50
Natural Environment Research Council	1·15
Science and Engineering Research Council	3·20

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the governor of Sudbury prison became aware of the mistake involving a release date for a prisoner who is going to be released on 8 August instead of 8 April; and what action was taken by the governor as a result of becoming aware of this mistake.

Mrs. Rumbold: The governor of Sudbury became aware of the mistake involving the release date of this prisoner on 5 April 1991 and the prisoner in question was granted home leave on compassionate grounds from 8-11 April 1991. The governor has improved the procedures for informing prisoners at Sudbury of the date approved for their release on parole.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to apologise to a prisoner at Sudbury prison for the notification of a release date of 8 April instead of 8 August.

Mrs. Rumbold: On discovery of the mistake regarding his release date, the governor apologised to the prisoner concerned for the distress which had been caused.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mistakes involving release dates for prisoners at Sudbury prison are known to have been made during the last 12 months.

Mrs. Rumbold: One.

Charities

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will propose amendment to European Community draft directive COM (90) 314 FINAL-SYN 87 to protect the interests of charities.

Mrs. Rumbold: In discussion with their European Community partners, the Government are seeking to ensure that the directive makes proper allowance for the needs of charities and other data users.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from charities concerning the potential impact on their fund-raising activities of EC draft directive COM (90) 314 FINAL-SYN 87.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received six representations from or on behalf of organisations with charitable status about the impact of the draft directive on their fund-raising activities.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what instructions he issues to police forces in England and Wales on the procedures for prompt checking of prospective adopters of children from overseas in order to comply with entry clearance procedures; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will revise his instructions to police forces on the procedure for checking prospective adopters of children from overseas for entry clearance in order to shorten the procedure.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidance to police forces about checking those applying to work with or to care for children is contained in Home Office circular 102/88. We have no present plans to revise it.

Police, Leicestershire

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of police officers in Leicestershire for each year since 1979, including 1991-92; and when he plans to make a decision on the number of police officers for 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table sets out the establishment and strength details for the Leicestershire constabulary for each year since 1979.

As at 31 December	*Establishment*	*Strength*
1979	1,706	1,701
1980	1,727	1,720
1981	1,727	1,728
1982	1,733	1,725
1983	1,733	1,736
1984	1,733	1,703
1985	1,733	1,750
1986	1,733	1,716
1987	1,733	1,762
1988	1,733	1,747
1989	1,760	1,748
1990	1,813	1,784
[1]1991	1,827	—

[1] with effect from 1 October 1991

The Leicestershire police authority has applied for an additional 27 police posts for 1991-93. Its application will be carefully considered, with advice from HM inspector of constabulary, together with applications from other police authorities. My right hon. Friend aims to announce his decision in late autumn.

Overseas Students

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place between the Department of Education and Science and his Department to ensure that overseas students at present studying at the South West London college, Tooting,

London are treated with understanding in cases of applications for visa extension to complete their studies due to transfer of their studies to other London colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No discussions have taken place. All students who are able to satisfy the requirements of the immigration rules will be given an extension to complete their studies.

Rape

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rapes were reported in the last year for which figures are available; and how many resulted in *(a)* a charge, *(b)* a prosecution and *(c)* a conviction.

Mr. John Patten: The provisional number of offences of rape recorded by the police in 1990 is published in table 2 of "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 4/91". The number of persons found guilty of rape in 1989 is published in table S4. 1(A) of "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables, 1989 Vol. 4". Corresponding information for 1990 is not yet available. A detailed analysis of offences of rape was published in "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 4/89, Statistics of offences of rape 1977-87". Information on reporting and recording of sexual offences is published in table A.2 of "The 1988 British Crime Survey" (Home Office research study 111) and on rape in table 2 of "Concerns about rape" (Home Office research study 106). Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Policing Costs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost in the last three financial years of policing major national sporting events and demonstrations in the metropolitan police area not covered by the national and imperial services grant or its successor.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The additional 1 per cent. specific grant paid in recognition of the national duties performaned by the Metropolitan police is not hypothecated to specific functions, and therefore the information requested is not available.

Crime, Northumberland

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northumbria as to how many house burglaries were reported to the Northumbrian police in 1990, or the latest year for which figures are available in *(a)* Northumbria and *(b)* Newcastle as a whole and, of these, how many led to (i) prosecution and (ii) conviction;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northumbria as to how many car thefts were reported to the Northumbrian police in 1990, or the latest year for which figures are available in *(a)* Northumbria as a whole and *(b)* Newcastle and, of these, how many led to (i) prosecution and (ii) conviction;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northumbria as to how many cars were reported to the Northumbrian police as damaged through break-ins in 1990, or the latest year for which figures are available, in *(a)* Northumbria as a whole and *(b)* Newcastle; and how many reports led to (i) prosecution and (ii) conviction.

Mr. John Patten: The available information for 1990 on notifiable offences recorded in the Northumbria police force area is in the Library. Information on cars damaged during break-ins is not available centrally. The available information on prosecutions and convictions in Northumbria is contained in the chief constable's annual report which is also available in the Library.

Extradition (Irish Republic)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the persons who have been extradited for political offences since 1980 *(a)* from Great Britain to the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* from the Republic of Ireland to Great Britain, giving the year in which the extradition occurred and indicating the outcome in each case.

Mr. John Patten: None. The Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 and the reciprocal Irish legislation preclude extradition for political offences.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will ban the export of all animals for experimentation;

(2) if he will list the countries to which the exportation of animals for experimentation is not allowed.

Mrs. Rumbold: No such bans exist, nor do the Government have any plans to introduce such restrictions.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dogs were exported from the United Kingdom for experimentation in each year since 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Home Office does not collect such statistics.

Ashwell Prison

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will identify the reasons for the delay between the carrying out of the inspection of Ashwell prison in September 1990, and the delivery of the report to him until December 1990, and then published with his statement on June 6; and what action he intends to take to speed up this process in future.

Mrs. Rumbold: Arrangements for preparing reports on his inspections of prison establishments are a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons. Arrangements for advising Ministers on the recommendations in each report are the responsibility of the prison service. The chief inspector presented his report on Her Majesty's prison Ashwell to my right hon. Friend on 21 December 1990. The inspectorate was notified of our response to the report on 3 May 1991 so that it could arrange for printing and distribution. In between those dates officials of the prison service were considering the main recommendations of the report and its wider implications.

We have already issued instructions to ensure that when a report from the chief inspector is submitted it is dealt

with expeditiously by the prison service. My right hon. Friend also regularly reviews with the chief inspector the work of his office.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on his intentions regarding recommendation 5·4 of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons regarding Ashwell prison; and whether he will list the recommendations addressed to the governor which have already been implemented or will shortly be so.

Mrs. Rumbold: The complement of the physical education department at Ashwell prison has been reviewed and an additional post will be considered with other bids when trained staff become available.

The inspector's recommendations 5·7, 5·8, 5·11 and 5·19 to the governor have been implemented. Recommendation 5·16 was not accepted since current meal times at Ashwell are considered to be reasonable and later times would not make the best use of staff. Recommendation 5·13 has been accepted by the governor: reallocation of medical, psychiatric and psychological resources is being considered at headquarters. The governor expects to complete his review of the remaining seven recommendations shortly.

Immigration Service (Interpreters)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policy and vetting is adopted in respect of the employment of interpreters by the immigration service; how many there are; what languages are covered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The recruitment of interpreters for permanent pensionable employment with the Home Office is conducted by the Civil Service Commission which runs an open competition when a vacancy arises. Currently the immigration service has eight such employees, who in the main, speak languages of the Indian sub-continent. In addition, casual, fee-paid interpreting services are used by the immigration service as required. Applicants for fee-paid work are interviewed and assessed for suitability by a chief immigration officer or more senior officer. Other checks may be made if necessary. An interpreter employed for the first time is required to give a written undertaking that he will translate faithfully and to the best of his ability. Interpreters are instructed to give a direct translation of questions put and answers given.

Passport Thefts

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the theft of passports from Wells, Somerset in recent years; if any persons have been prosecuted in relation to this matter; whether the serial numbers of the stolen passports were notified to all United Kingdom ports and to appropriate international agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In Great Britain Post Office Counters Ltd. issue British visitors passports (BVPs) on behalf of the United Kingdom Passport Agency. In March 1988 a quantity of BVPs was stolen from a modified sub post office in Wells. This theft formed part of a conspiracy to burgle for which seven persons appeared before Cardiff crown court on 16 April 1990; they admitted the offence and were sentenced between two and six years' imprisonment. The serial numbers of the stolen BVPs were notified by the then Passport Department to the immigration service and the police and to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for routine circulation abroad.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken to recover passports stolen from Wells, Somerset; whether any person has been detained within the United Kingdom or abroad travelling on a passport stolen from Wells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Investigation of the British visitors passports stolen in Wells in 1988 was a matter for the Post Office investigation branch and the Somerset and Avon police. I understand that a number of persons detained in western European countries for various offences were found to be in possession of British visitors passports from the series reported stolen. In one of these cases investigations are continuing into possible immigration offences.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank and Building Society Lending

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, for each month from January 1977 to the present, *(a)* the annual rate of growth of bank and building society lending in real terms, using the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments as the deflator, *(b)* the annual rate of growth of bank and building society lending over the previous six months, seasonally adjusted and *(c)* the annual rate of growth of bank and building society lending, in real terms, over the previous six months, seasonally adjusted, using the retail prices index excluding mortage interest payments as the deflator.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information is as follows (figures for earlier periods are not readily available):

Banks and building societies
Sterling lending to the M4 private sector
Percentage growth

	(a) *Over 12 months*	*(b)* *Over 6 months annualised (seasonally adjusted)*		*(c)*
	Real terms	*Current prices*		*Real terms*
1983 January	—	16·6		9·7
1983 February	—	16·8		9·5
1983 March	—	16·4		9·9
1983 April	—	15·1		9·6

	(a) Over 12 months	(b) Over 6 months annualised (seasonally adjusted)	(c)
	Real terms	Current prices	Real terms
1983 May	—	15·5	10·5
1983 June	13·2	15·5	10·6
1983 July	11·4	16·0	10·8
1983 August	10·5	14·9	9·4
1983 September	10·4	16·9	11·0
1983 October	10·3	16·6	11·1
1983 November	10·3	15·8	10·5
1983 December	10·4	16·1	10·7
1984 January	11·5	17·3	12·2
1984 February	11·4	18·0	12·9
1984 March	11·8	17·4	12·1
1984 April	12·0	18·3	12·8
1984 May	11·5	18·1	12·6
1984 June	11·6	17·8	12·3
1984 July	12·4	17·5	12·4
1984 August	12·9	17·1	12·3
1984 September	12·8	17·8	13·4
1984 October	13·0	17·6	12·8
1984 November	13·5	18·4	13·7
1984 December	13·4	18·3	13·8
1985 January	12·9	18·9	13·7
1985 February	12·4	18·0	12·9
1985 March	12·5	19·0	13·1
1985 April	12·2	19·0	13·0
1985 May	12·2	18·7	12·7
1985 June	12·3	18·3	12·3
1985 July	12·4	17·1	11·3
1985 August	12·3	17·8	11·9
1985 September	11·3	16·1	10·0
1985 October	11·7	16·0	10·3
1985 November	11·4	15·5	9·7
1985 December	11·4	15·5	9·9
1986 January	10·8	15·1	9·7
1986 February	11·8	16·6	11·2
1986 March	12·1	17·3	12·8
1986 April	12·8	16·9	13·2
1986 May	12·8	17·7	14·0
1986 June	13·4	18·7	14·8
1986 July	14·1	19·9	16·1
1986 August	14·6	19·7	15·8
1986 September	14·2	18·4	14·5
1986 October	15·0	20·3	16·4
1986 November	15·7	21·1	17·2
1986 December	16·2	21·2	17·2
1987 January	16·3	20·5	16·3
1987 February	15·5	19·7	15·4
1987 March	14·7	19·9	15·5
1987 April	15·4	18·8	14·6
1987 May	15·2	17·9	13·6
1987 June	15·2	17·6	13·6
1987 July	15·4	18·6	14·4
1987 August	14·7	18·0	13·8
1987 September	16·0	19·8	15·7
1987 October	14·8	19·7	15·2
1987 November	14·3	20·3	15·6
1987 December	14·5	20·7	16·0
1988 January	15·8	21·5	17·2
1988 February	15·8	22·2	18·0
1988 March	16·5	22·2	17·8
1988 April	17·0	24·3	19·3
1988 May	17·1	24·5	19·2
1988 June	17·4	25·5	19·9
1988 July	17·7	26·2	20·2
1988 August	18·2	26·4	20·4
1988 September	18·2	26·3	20·1
1988 October	18·6	25·4	19·3
1988 November	18·5	25·1	19·0
1988 December	18·5	24·2	18·2

	(a) Over 12 months	(b) Over 6 months annualised (seasonally adjusted)	(c)
	Real terms	Current prices	Real terms
1989 January	18·0	23·1	16·7
1989 February	17·6	22·7	16·1
1989 March	17·6	22·5	15·8
1989 April	16·6	21·8	15·0
1989 May	16·3	21·6	14·7
1989 June	15·7	21·2	14·4
1989 July	14·9	20·8	14·2
1989 August	15·3	21·6	15·1
1989 September	15·4	21·9	15·2
1989 October	14·4	21·1	14·1
1989 November	14·0	20·3	13·4
1989 December	14·3	21·4	14·5
1990 January	13·5	20·4	13·5
1990 February	13·7	19·8	12·8
1990 March	13·3	19·2	12·2
1990 April	10·9	18·3	9·6
1990 May	10·3	18·3	9·4
1990 June	9·7	16·3	7·5
1990 July	8·7	15·3	6·5
1990 August	7·1	14·0	4·5
1990 September	5·7	12·4	2·7
1990 October	5·4	12·8	3·0
1990 November	5·7	12·7	3·2
1990 December	4·4	11·5	2·3
1991 January	4·2	11·2	2·5
1991 February	3·5	10·9	2·1
1991 March	2·4	9·7	1·2
1991 April	3·7	8·7	1·8

Banks and building societies lending to the M4 private sector:
(a) 12 month growth rate in real terms
(b) 6 month growth rate (sa)
(c) 6 month growth rate (sa) in real terms

Small Businesses

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the course of his consideration of the banks' lending policies to small businesses, he intends to meet the chairmen of the leading Scottish banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am holding meetings to discuss this issue with the chairmen of the four largest United Kingdom banks, and with the chairman of the British Bankers Association. The more detailed inquiries which my officials are conducting together with the Bank of England involve a wider range of banks, including the leading Scottish banks.

Ferry Fares

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy at any meeting of the Council of Ministers of Finance to resist any moves to require VAT to be imposed on ferry fares.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government have made it clear that the United Kingdom is opposed to any move which would restrict our ability to use existing zero rates.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the average weekly civil service pension paid in 1990;

(2) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of civil service pensioners;

(3) what is his most up to date estimatee of the number of civil service pensioners in receipt of annual civil service pensions of *(a)* up to £1,000 per annum, *(b)* £1,001 to £2,000 per annum, *(c)* £2,001 to £3,000 per annum, *(d)* £3,001 to £4,000 per annum, *(e)* £4,001 to £5,000 per annum, *(f)* £5,001 to £6,000 per annum, *(g)* £6,001 to £7,000 per annum, *(h)* £7,001 to £10,000 per annum, *(i)* £10,001 to £15,000 per annum and *(j)* £15,001 and above.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The average weekly civil service pension paid in 1990 was £25·70. The number of civil service pensioners as at 31 May 1991 was 509,634 of whom 46,408 were in receipt of weekly paid pensions. It is estimated that the number of civil service pensions, within the indicated bands as at 31 March 1991, were as follows:

	Number
(a) up to £1,000 per annum	151,217
(b) £1,001 to £2,000 per annum	125,550
(c) £2,001 to £3,000 per annum	66,881
(d) £3,001 to £4,000 per annum	43,366
(e) £4,001 to £5,000 per annum	27,802
(f) £5,001 to £6,000 per annum	23,216
(g) £6,001 to £7,000 per annum	18,047
(h) £7,001 to £10,000 per annum	32,252
(i) £10,001 to £15,000 per annum	15,720
(j) £15,001 per annum and above	5,537

Veterinary Services

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total of receipts of value added tax levied on accounts for veterinary services and medicines, in each of the last three available years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available.

Alcohol Duties

Sir George Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the detailed provisional outturns in 1990-91 by both volume and excise revenue for *(a)* still wines not exceeding 15 per cent. alcohol, *(b)* still wines exceeding 15 per cent. alcohol, *(c)* sparkling wines, *(d)* beer, *(e)* cider and perry, *(f)* made-wines and *(g)* spirits; and if he will give his similarly detailed latest forecasts for 1991-92.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The following provisional information is available. Forecasts of volumes are not available for 1991-92.

	1990-91 outturns		*1991-92 forecast*[1]
	Clearances (thousand hectolitres)	*Revenue (£ billion)*	*Revenue (£ billion)*
(a) Still wine below 15 per cent.[2]	5,920	0·6	0·9
(b) Still wine above 15 per cent.[2]	380	0·1	
(c) Sparkling wine	360	0·1	
(f) Made wine	680	0·1	
(d) Beer	62,540	2·2	2·3
(e) Cider and perry	[3]3,690	0·1	0·1
(g) Spirits	[4]990	1·7	1·9

[1] Chancellor's 1991-92 Budget Statement forecasts.
[2] Wine of fresh grape.
[3] Estimated.
[4] Pure spirit alcohol.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish tables on the same basis as at table P, page 119 of *Economic Trends* March 1991, No. 449, showing figures separately for *(a)* retired and *(b)* non-retired households.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 11 June 1991]:* The information is as follows:

Taxes and benefits as percentages of income by quintile groups of households[1] *1977-88*

	1977	*1979*	*1981*	*1983*	*1985*	*1987*	*1988*
(a) Retired households							
Cash benefits as percentages of gross income:							
Bottom quintile group	90	93	91	90	85	88	87
2nd quintile group	90	91	88	88	86	86	85
3rd quintile group	86	87	83	82	81	78	81
4th quintile group	74	74	72	69	66	60	57
Top quintile group	34	37	34	31	28	22	24
Average over all households	65	67	64	61	58	52	53
Income tax, NIC and domestic rates as percentages of gross income:							
Bottom quintile group	13	11	11	12	16	15	18
2nd quintile group	8	8	9	9	10	12	12
3rd quintile group	9	8	10	9	11	12	13
4th quintile group	11	10	11	11	13	14	14
Top quintile group	22	20	20	22	22	23	21
Average over all households	15	13	14	15	16	17	17
Indirect taxes as percentages of disposable income:							
Bottom quintile group	19	19	21	26	28	27	27
2nd quintile group	16	16	19	21	19	20	21
3rd quintile group	15	16	17	20	17	18	18
4th quintile group	15	17	18	20	20	21	21
Top quintile group	17	16	19	18	17	19	18
Average over all households	16	17	19	20	19	20	20
Benefits in kind as percentages of final income:							
Bottom quintile group	36	34	36	36	37	39	44
2nd quintile group	32	33	34	32	31	33	34
3rd quintile group	30	33	32	29	28	29	32
4th quintile group	28	28	28	26	25	25	25
Top quintile group	15	16	16	15	13	12	13
Average over all households	26	27	27	25	24	24	25
(b) Non-retired households							
Cash benefits as percentages of gross income:							
Bottom quintile group	26	29	35	47	53	53	49
2nd quintile group	11	12	14	17	17	18	15
3rd quintile group	7	8	8	10	9	8	7
4th quintile group	4	5	5	6	5	4	3
Top quintile group	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Average over all households	7	8	9	11	11	10	8

	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1988
Income tax, NIC and domestic rates as percentages of gross income:							
Bottom quintile group	22	17	17	16	14	14	17
2nd quintile group	23	20	20	21	20	19	19
3rd quintile group	24	21	23	23	22	21	21
4th quintile group	24	22	24	25	24	23	22
Top quintile group	24	23	24	25	25	24	22
Average over all households	24	21	23	23	22	22	21
Indirect taxes as percentages of disposable income:							
Bottom quintile group	26	24	28	28	27	28	31
2nd quintile group	22	23	24	25	25	25	25
3rd quintile group	21	22	23	24	23	22	23
4th quintile group	20	21	22	23	22	20	21
Top quintile group	17	19	19	19	18	16	15
Average over all households	20	21	22	23	22	20	21
Benefits in kind as percentages of final income:							
Bottom quintile group	40	38	42	42	39	43	43
2nd quintile group	27	25	27	27	25	25	26
3rd quintile group	21	19	20	21	18	18	18
4th quintile group	15	13	15	14	12	12	11
Top quintile group	8	8	7	9	7	5	5
Average over all households	19	18	19	19	17	16	16

[1] Ranked by equivalised disposable income for retired and non-retired households respectively.
Source: CSO, from Family Expenditure Surveys.

Financial Statistics

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, for each month from January 1977 inclusive, *(a)* the average three-month inter-bank rate, *(b)* the average three-month inter-bank rate in real terms, using the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments as the deflator and *(c)* the percentage growth in bank and building society lending over the same month in the previous year.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* The available information is as follows (figures for earlier periods are not readily available):

		3 month inter-bank rate (average over month)		*Bank and building societies lending to M4 private sector (Percentage annual growth)*
		Current prices	*Real terms*	
1978	January	6·26	−3·87	—
	February	6·87	−3·04	—
	March	6·82	−2·80	—
	April	7·62	−1·09	—
	May	9·30	0·93	—
	June	10·04	1·91	—
	July	10·18	2·05	—
	August	9·45	1·21	—
	September	9·37	1·38	—
	October	10·57	2·73	—
	November	12·07	3·95	—
	December	12·35	4·07	—
1979	January	12·70	3·85	—
	February	13·32	4·09	—
	March	12·06	2·99	—
	April	11·69	2·40	—
	May	11·82	2·38	—
	June	13·12	2·72	—
	July	13·98	−0·68	—
	August	14·12	−0·82	—
	September	14·17	−1·22	—
	October	14·12	−1·94	—
	November	16·24	−0·45	—
	December	16·81	0·16	—
1980	January	17·16	−0·19	—
	February	17·77	0·00	—
	March	18·11	−0·39	—
	April	17·64	−2·47	—
	May	17·05	−3·13	—
	June	16·77	−2·80	—
	July	15·88	−0·02	—

		3 month inter-bank rate (average over month)		Bank and building societies lending to M4 private sector (Percentage annual growth)
		Current prices	Real terms	
	August	16·53	1·24	—
	September	16·00	0·90	—
	October	15·98	1·46	—
	November	15·84	1·44	—
	December	14·73	0·55	—
1981	January	14·28	1·23	—
	February	13·04	0·41	—
	March	12·65	−0·06	—
	April	12·33	−0·10	—
	May	12·40	0·06	—
	June	12·66	0·80	—
	July	13·79	2·16	—
	August	14·18	1·86	—
	September	14·78	2·60	—
	October	16·33	3·65	—
	November	15·06	2·60	—
	December	15·44	3·13	—
1982	January	15·13	3·07	—
	February	14·48	3·49	—
	March	13·57	3·34	—
	April	13·77	4·31	—
	May	13·35	3·87	—
	June	13·00	3·85	—
	July	12·37	3·67	—
	August	11·11	3·32	—
	September	10·89	3·40	—
	October	9·79	2·68	—
	November	9·39	2·48	—
	December	10·62	3·77	—
1983	January	11·21	4·60	—
	February	11·34	4·35	—
	March	10·98	4·81	—
	April	10·26	5·00	—
	May	10·26	5·53	—
	June	9·94	5·23	18·9
	July	9·89	4·95	17·2
	August	9·87	4·56	16·7
	September	9·69	4·16	16·9
	October	9·38	4·25	16·3
	November	9·30	4·32	16·2
	December	9·42	4·34	16·5
1984	January	9·45	4·72	17·2
	February	9·38	4·68	17·2
	March	8·95	4·04	17·3
	April	8·88	3·81	17·7
	May	9·40	4·31	17·1
	June	9·45	4·37	17·3
	July	11·51	6·71	17·7
	August	11·07	6·54	17·9
	September	10·83	6·68	17·4
	October	10·67	6·17	18·0
	November	9·93	5·59	18·4
	December	9·82	5·63	17·9
1985	January	11·68	6·82	18·0
	February	13·76	8·83	17·5
	March	13·63	8·01	18·3
	April	12·76	7·06	18·2
	May	12·66	6·98	18·2
	June	12·44	6·78	18·1
	July	12·04	6·50	18·1
	August	11·50	5·89	18·1
	September	11·55	5·73	17·4
	October	11·55	6·08	17·4
	November	11·57	6·00	17·2
	December	11·76	6·31	17·0
1986	January	12·83	7·57	16·2
	February	12·65	7·42	17·3
	March	11·72	7·45	16·4

		3 month inter-bank rate (average over month)		Bank and building societies lending to M4 private sector (Percentage annual growth)
		Current prices	Real terms	
	April	10·48	6·99	16·3
	May	10·22	6·75	16·3
	June	9·78	6·21	17·1
	July	9·96	6·50	17·6
	August	9·84	6·27	18·3
	September	10·12	6·45	17·9
	October	11·04	7·46	18·6
	November	11·17	7·59	19·4
	December	11·36	7·67	20·1
1987	January	11·05	7·16	20·4
	February	10·86	6·88	19·7
	March	9·97	5·93	19·2
	April	9·80	5·91	19·6
	May	8·82	4·87	19·5
	June	8·90	5·17	19·3
	July	9·21	5·35	19·6
	August	10·04	6·17	18·8
	September	10·16	6·41	20·1
	October	9·98	5·81	19·3
	November	8·95	4·73	18·9
	December	8·77	4·57	19·0
1988	January	8·97	5·08	20·1
	February	9·27	5·48	20·0
	March	8·89	4·92	21·1
	April	8·30	3·91	22·1
	May	8·03	3·46	22·5
	June	8·93	4·04	23·1
	July	10·55	5·27	23·8
	August	11·39	6·10	24·3
	September	12·15	6·64	24·5
	October	12·04	6·56	24·9
	November	12·31	6·83	24·8
	December	13·13	7·62	24·8
1989	January	13·14	7·25	24·6
	February	13·02	6·95	24·3
	March	13·05	6·91	24·3
	April	13·13	6·78	23·4
	May	13·14	6·72	23·2
	June	14·15	7·80	22·4
	July	13·92	7·68	21·5
	August	13·85	7·73	21·8
	September	14·02	7·73	22·0
	October	15·02	8·42	21·3
	November	15·11	8·53	20·8
	December	15·12	8·55	21·2
1990	January	15·16	8·52	20·4
	February	15·11	8·40	20·7
	March	15·29	8·51	20·4
	April	15·21	6·74	19·6
	May	15·15	6·48	19·2
	June	14·97	6·24	18·9
	July	14·95	6·13	17·8
	August	15·00	5·42	16·8
	September	14·91	4·97	15·8
	October	14·03	4·15	15·5
	November	13·64	4·07	15·5
	December	13·80	4·40	13·9
1991	January	13·97	5·01	13·2
	February	13·25	4·32	12·4
	March	12·40	3·66	11·1
	April	11·95	4·85	10·7

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Roger Windsor

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Prime Minister whether Mr. Roger Windsor, formerly chief executive of the National Union of Mineworkers, has ever been employed by Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 12 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall have further meetings later today.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Redundant Churches Fund

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right honourable Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what are the financial implications for the redundant churches fund in respect of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure of the change after the circulation of the draft measure of the word "obtain" to "seek" in respect of the views of the Diocesan Advisory Committee in clause 15(i) of the Measure.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): There are no implications for the redundant churches fund.

CIVIL SERVICE

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his office during the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Renton: This information is not held centrally.

HEALTH

Health Authorities (Management Costs)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the management costs of health authorities in the 1980-81 accounts and in each subsequent year to 31 March, detailing by authority in each region.

Mr. Dorrell: No comprehensive information specifically on the management costs of health authorities is held centrally. However, a table showing the expenditure on headquarters administration as reported in the annual accounts of each regional and district health authority in England for the years since the establishment of district health authorities on 1 April 1982, has been placed in the Library. Figures for each special health authority for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals, which cannot be attributed to particular regions, are also included for completeness.

Regions are managed in an integrated way and it would be misleading to interpret regional health authority (RHA) data in isolation from the districts they manage. In particular, the division of functions between the RHA and districts and between districts varies from region to region. Consequently the region totals provide a more valid picture.

Maternity Units

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of stay in a maternity hospital in each district health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated average length of stay of a maternity delivery patient in England in the year 1989-90 was five days. Information on post-natal average length of stay at district health authority level is available in the health service indicator package, a copy of which is available in the Library.

TUC Health Services Committee

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when in the last 12 months he has met the Trade Union Congress health services committee; and which trades unions were represented at those meetings.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I met the health services committee of the TUC on 5 March and my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State met the committee on 19 July 1990. The following trades unions were represented:

Confederation of Health Service Employees
GMB
Health Visitors Association
Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
MSF
National and Local Government Officers Association
National Union of Public Employees
Prison Officers Association
Society of Radiographers
Transport and General Workers Union.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the report of the independent expert group set up in March 1990 to investigate whether the emission of toxic gases from fungal growth on cot mattresses could be a cause of cot deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report is published today by HMSO and copies have been placed in the Library. The independent expert working group concluded that the hypothesis that toxic gases evolved from chemicals in cot mattresses are a cause of sudden infant death syndrome is not supported by experimental evidence.

The group recommended that, despite the absence of evidence to implicate toxic materials used as fillers or fire retardants in cot furnishings, as a matter of prudence, the need for such additives should be reconsidered. If antimony trioxide is used as the fire retardant, only material with the lowest possible levels of arsenic contaminant should be used.

The Department of Trade and Industry will keep under review the use of potentially toxic materials in cot furnishings.

As an incidental finding to the work to investigate the hypothesis the expert working group noted that cot

mattresses used by healthy babies and those used by babies who had died from sudden infant death syndrome were contaminated by a number of micro-organisms including some which were potentially pathogenic. There were differences in both the types and the level of contamination. They were unable to draw conclusions from these incidental findings. They recommended that specific investigation of the significance of the findings of microbial contamination take place.

The chief medical officer has asked a group of experts to advise him on research to determine the significance of the microbiological contamination.

I am most grateful to the independent expert group and its chairman, Professor Paul Turner, for producing such a comprehensive and carefully considered report. They were supported in this by some very detailed analytical research from both the International Mycological Institute at Kew and the Laboratory of the Government Chemist.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much expenditure on the national health service has increased in south Bedfordshire in real and cash terms since May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The South Bedfordshire health authority was established on 1 April 1982. The annual accounts of the authority record total revenue expenditure of £30·80 million (cash) for 1982-83 and £57·03 million (cash) for 1989-90 (the latest year available). Those figures represent increases of 85·2 per cent. in cash terms and 28·3 per cent. in real terms (measured at 1989-90 prices).

Prior to 1 April 1982 the authority's predecessor health district formed part of the larger Bedfordshire area health authority. For Bedfordshire as a whole the annual accounts of the relevant health authorities record total revenue expenditure of £32·30 million (cash) for 1978-79 and £104·64 million (cash) for 1989-90. Those figures represent increases of 224 per cent. in cash terms and 38·5 per cent. in real terms (measured at 1989-90 prices).

National Association of Young People in Care

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many meetings Ministers have held or had arranged with representatives of the National Association of Young People in Care in the past two years; and what was the subject of such meetings;

(2) if he will make a statement on the support his Department has been making available to the National Association of Young People in Care over the last five years;

(3) when he expects to make a decision on the current application for core funding grant aid in respect of the National Association of Young Children in Care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will be meeting representatives of the National Association of Young Children in Care (NAYPIC) later this week, when current issues in residential care and the future funding of the association will be amongst the topics to be discussed. No other ministerial meetings have been held with NAYPIC during the past two years although the association has been in regular contact with officials.

A grant of £82,000 was awarded to NAYPIC for the period 1 January 1987-31 March 1988, and one of £64,000 per annum for the two years 1988-89 and 1989-90. Because of difficulties within the association, payment of grant was suspended at the end of December 1988. While the grant was reinstated in August 1989 no further payments were made because of renewed problems within the association.

A final decision about NAYPIC's current application for funding will be made shortly.

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is funded by his Department into polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and their carcinogenic consequences.

Mr. Dorrell: Funding of research on biomedical aspects of the effects of environmental pollution on health lies within the remit of the Medical Research Council and the Department keeps the results of research in this area under review.

The small area health statistics unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which is jointly funded by this and other Government Departments, has been asked to investigate cancer and mortality rates around industrial installations such as cooking works and incinerators both of which are known to emit polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

The Department is also funding work at the Laboratory of the Government Chemist which includes an investigation of the PAHs present in cigarette smoke.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to reduce the hours worked by junior hospital doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are issuing today further guidance to health authorities, health boards and NHS trusts on reducing the hours of duty of hospital doctors and dentists in training. A copy has been placed in the Library. At the heart of the guidance is an agreement between the health departments and the medical profession setting, for the first time, explicit controls on the contractual hours of duty of doctors in training, including controls on the maximum periods of continuous duty and minimum periods of off duty time, for each of the working arrangements (full shifts, partial shifts and on-call rotas). The agreement also sets a clear timetable for change.

The agreement is accompanied by guidance to assist authorities, boards and trusts, with the help of task forces, and, in Scotland, local implementation groups, to achieve reductions in hours while maintaining clinical standards and educational opportunities. This includes guidance on changing patterns of work for hospital doctors in training, including illustrations of shift patterns which meet the hours criteria; guidance on making the best use of nursing and midwifery staff and technical, clerical, administrative and other staff to help to reduce the hours of work of doctors in training while delivering improved patient care; good practice guidance on living and working conditions for doctors in training; guidance from the Central Consultants and Specialists Committee on the role of consultants in providing emergency cover throughout the 24-hour period and on the need to move to a more team-based method of working; and guidance from the conference of medical royal colleges and individual colleges and faculties on the educational and training implications of reducing hours.

In addition the Government have made funds available for additional medical staff to help authorities, boards and trusts to reduce hours.

The ministerial group on junior doctors' hours, its supporting technical group and parallel groups in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will continue to monitor progress in reducing hours and I look forward to seeing real advances made on this front.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Jammu and Kashmir

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now refer the situation in Jammu and Kashmir to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We expressed concern about the situation in Kashmir at the United Nations Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva on 27 February, in a joint European Community statement.

Minority Group Rights

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international treaties and conventions exist providing for the protection of the rights of minority groups, as opposed to the rights of individuals.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no multilateral United Nations or Council of Europe treaties and conventions which protect minority groups as such. Individuals belonging to minorities are given particular mention in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of voluntary repatriation of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong; what resources have been provided by Her Majesty's Government for the care and screening of asylum-seekers; and what discussions he has had with the Governments of Thailand and Malaysia concerning treatment of Vietnamese boat people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As of 6 June 1991, 7,088 Vietnamese migrants had volunteered to return to Vietnam from Hong Kong. Just under 500 volunteers were awaiting repatriation, less than 1 per cent. of the total camp population. Since 1989, Her Majesty's Government have spent £34·891 million either directly or via UNHCR on the care and screening of Vietnamese asylum seekers.

On discussion with the Malaysian and Thai Governments, I refer the hon. Member to the recent joint declaration of the EC/ASEAN ministerial meeting held in Luxembourg on 30-31 May 1991, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong have been resettled in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Hong Kong, outside the detention centres, *(c)* other EC countries, *(d)* other Commonwealth countries and *(e)* the United States of America.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the period 1979-1990 a total of 13,703 refugees were resettled in the United Kingdom; 126 in Hong Kong; 6,988 in other EC countries; 32,240 in other Commonwealth countries and 63,650 in the United States of America.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Kingdom financial assistance under the PHARE—Poland Hungary Aid for Reconstruction of the Economy—programme is being made directly to eastern European countries so that they can select and buy in their own preferred specialists and advisers to help them on social issues, including development of trade union organisations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Commitment of all the PHARE programme funds for central and eastern European countries is determined by the European Commission and the Management Committee of Member States; no funds are made available to central and east European Governments to use at their discretion. The development of trade union organisations is not one of the PHARE programme's priorities.

Kurdish People

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Government of Turkey concerning the treatment of Kurdish people in Turkey.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British Ministers and officials regularly raise human rights issues with the Turkish Government. As to Kurdish people in Turkey, we look to the Turkish Government, as to other Governments where substantial groups of Kurdish origin live, to respect the international treaties to which they are a party.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Kurdish Front of Iraq about the negotiations it is holding with the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We remain in close contact with the Kurdish leadership and have the opportunity to discuss with them a range of subjects, including progress in their discussions with the central authorities in Baghdad, on a regular basis.

Baltic States

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions in each of the last five years Her Majesty's consul in Moscow has visited *(a)* Estonia, *(b)* Latvia and *(c)* Lithuania.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's consul in Moscow has made no official visits to these republics in recent years. He has, however, made private visits.

Working visits have been made to all three of the Baltic states by other embassy officers, all of whom have been prepared to handle consular matters.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives are

currently being taken or considered which would make available the expertise and skills of industry in the United Kingdom to the Governments of the Baltic republics in order to assist them in diversifying their own economies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British expertise and skills are being made available to the Baltic states through the know-how fund for the Soviet Union, which began disbursing in April. One of the projects already approved under the know-how fund is in the Baltic states and other projects there are under consideration.

Mecca Tunnel Disaster

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *437*, he will make a statement about progress made by the Saudi Arabian Government in tracing British citizens missing since the tunnel disaster at Mecca on 2 July 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Riyadh continues to press the Saudi Arabian authorities vigorously for news of progress towards the identification of the three missing British nationals from among the unidentified victims of the tunnel disaster of 2 July 1990.

I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as the embassy has received a response.

Cayman Islands

Mr Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when the review of the constitution of the Cayman Islands will be published.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commissioners' report has been published as a Command Paper. Copies are available in the Library of the House. The report will be released for public debate in the Cayman Islands by the governor.

South Africa

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received from the ANC on sporting links with South Africa; and what response he has made.

Mr. Hurd: The ANC has recently sought the British Government's support for the readmission of South Africa to the International Cricket Council. In reply we have welcomed the formation this month of one non-racial United Cricket Board of South Africa. I have explained to the ANC that the Government do not control sport in this country, but that I was sure that the ICC would wish to take account of this development. Under the United Cricket Board, cricket in South Africa will comply with the terms of the Gleneagles agreement and should resume its place in international sport. I hope that very soon South Africa will be re-admitted to international cricket. As other sports become non racial, the same will apply to them.

Food Aid (Soviet Union)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what types of food the 250 million ecu of EC food aid to the Soviet Union will consist of; how many tonnes it represents; what is its value in pounds sterling; from which EC budget it will be paid; and to which budget of Her Majesty's Government it will be attributed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* The 250 million ecu EC food aid for the Soviet Union is expected to comprise two tranches:

i) 50,000 tonnes whole milk powder
10,000 tonnes baby food
15,000 tonnes canned beef
5,000 tonnes canned pork

ii) tomato paste (worth 5 mecu)
beef (worth 10 mecu)
pasta (worth 8 mecu)
whole milk powder (worth 12 mecu)

The second tranche is likely to be worth 35 million ecu but the tonnage this represents remains to be established. At a conversion rate of 1 ecu = £0·7, the total food aid package will total some £175 million and will be funded from the 1990 European agriculture guarantee and guidance fund guarantee section surplus under the 1991 budget. The United Kingdom contribution is not attributed to any Government Department.

Sierra Leone

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests Her Majesty's Government have received from Sierra Leone for assistance in dealing with invading forces and refugees in the east of the country; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Following discussions with the Government of Sierra Leone we are supplying a quantity of non-lethal defence equipment to the Sierra Leone army.

There has been no recent request from the Sierra Leone Government for help in dealing with refugees or displaced persons. We have, however, already made a significant contribution to refugee relief operations in the region, arising from the conflict in Liberia. A further £1 million has recently been allocated to United Nations agencies for this purpose.

Somalia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Government of Somalia concerning the plight of refugees; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the fall of the Barre regime in January 1991, there has been no nationally accepted government in Somalia. We are in constant contact with British aid agencies and the United Nations. We have provided food aid and £1·25 million relief to help Somalia refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will meet the chairman of the International Stock Exchange to discuss delayed payments of fees and commissions to stockholders employed in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what costs were incurred by his Department in connection with the sale of the electricity distribution companies; and how much value added tax was incurred on those costs;

(2) what costs the electricity distribution companies incurred as principal in connection with their privatisation; on what costs incurred in this connection the electricity distribution companies recovered VAT; and how much VAT was recovered.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Electricity privatisation costs incurred by my Department in 1987-88 were £0·8 million, in 1988-89 £5·5 million, in 1989-90 £12·4 million, and in 1990-91 are estimated at £256·5 million. As many of the costs were jointly incurred on the privatisation of the distribution and generating companies, allocation of the costs to the two categories would not be meaningful. VAT paid so far is estimated at £14·6 million.

The costs incurred by the electricity distribution companies in connection with their privatisation are a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce details of the second tranche of the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We propose to make the second Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation Order for renewable sources of electricity generating capacity in the autumn of this year. Proposals for the 1991 renewables order are set out in "Renewable Energy Bulletin No. 4", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Kuwait Oil Fires

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what follow-up there has been to his visit to the Kuwait oil fires.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to the answers given to the hon. Member on 3 June 1991 at columns *10-11*.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish for each local authority in Northamptonshire the number of people presently receiving housing benefit and income support together with housing benefits; and what are the costs involved.

Miss Widdecombe: Initial estimates of housing benefit expenditure for 1991-92 from the Northamptonshire local authorities are in the table. The estimates do not distinguish between income support and non-income support cases.

Northamptonshire local authorities: Initial estimates of housing benefit expenditure—1991-92

	£ million
Corby	4·3
Daventry	2·7
East Northampton	2·8
Kettering	4·6
Northampton	14·2
South Northants	2·5
Wellingborough	4·4

A count of the number of people receiving housing benefit on 31 May 1991 is to be taken by local authorities shortly. The results will be available by the late summer.

Strategic Planning Guide

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date the strategic planning guide will be delivered to staff who are drawing up strategic plans for their area; and if he will send a copy to the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) for each year since 1986 what is the average time taken for processing an application for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* the higher rate of attendance allowance;

(2) whether the independent living fund is unable to process an application for assistance without the applicant first receiving confirmation of eligibility for the higher rate of attendance allowance; in how many cases the delay in processing the higher rate of attendance allowance claims has led to the blocking of hospital beds in spinal units; what steps he will take to ensure that attendance allowance claims are speeded up; and if he will consider introducing an additional question on the attendance allowance claim form to identify those people who have applied to the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what monitoring is undertaken by his Department of the expenditure of the social fund in local offices.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Injury Compensation Claims

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will establish an inquiry into the handling of the claim for injury compensation and related claims from Mr. Cameron, 87 Davis drive, Glenrothes, Fife; for how long the claims have been outstanding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of industrial injuries disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

TRANSPORT

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken as to the effect on the price of a gallon or litre of unleaded petrol of the abolition of vehicle excise duty and its transfer to petroleum spirit; and if he will set out the likely retail price based on average pump prices for the last quarter.

Mr. Chope: On the basis of that proposition the estimated increase in unleaded petrol would be 33·2 p a gallon (7·3 p a litre). The pump price (average last quarter) might be about 222 p a gallon (48·7 p a litre). The figures for the last quarter do not include the recent budget duty changes.

InterCity Services

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of punctuality was achieved by InterCity in 1981, 1986 and 1991.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's five business sectors were not introduced until 1982 so InterCity punctuality figures for 1981 are not available. The level of punctuality achieved by InterCity in both 1986-87 and 1990-91 is as follows:

Trains running on time or within 10 minutes: 85 per cent.

Rail Fares (VAT)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the annual effect on British Rail revenue and traffic volume of the imposition on rail fares of VAT at the rate of 4 per cent. and at the rate of 9 per cent.

Mr. Freeman: We estimate that the loss of gross revenue to British Rail would be in the approximate ranges of £50 to £90 million per annum for an imposition of 4 per cent. and £100 million to £200 million for 9 per cent. Reductions in passenger traffic of up to about 3 per cent. and 7 per cent. respectively would be likely. It is not possible to be precise, since the impact depends upon passenger response and the extent to which in the case of the grant-aided railway, higher VAT might be matched by increased grant.

Bus Services, Greater London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of each of the responses he has received to his proposals for de-regulation and privatisation of bus services in Greater London.

Mr. Freeman: We have received over 200 responses to the consultation paper "A Bus Strategy for London", many of which are lengthy and detailed documents. I do not see a case for bearing the cost of placing in the Library copies of all these documents. I shall, however, arrange for a list of respondents to be placed in the Library. An announcement on the Government's conclusions, following the consultation exercise will be made in due course.

Trailers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, (1) pursuant to his reply of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *227*, if he will detail the investigations that are currently taking place into variable sensing units to be fitted to trailers built before 1982;

(2) how many deaths have been reported in the last 12 months in accidents where one of the vehicles was a trailer with a variable sensing unit built prior to 1982.

Mr. Chope: We are investigating the accident and fatality statistics for trailers manufactured before 1982.

We have no detailed statistics for the last 12 months but police reports for 1988 indicate that there were 570 fatal accidents involving heavy goods vehicles in England and Wales.

To date 490 of these reports have been examined in detail revealing that there were three fatalities involving pre-1982 trailers which were not fitted with variable sensing units.

Discussions are taking place with the major vehicle and equipment manufacturers as well as vehicle operators.

Railway Stations

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to privatise railway stations.

Mr. Freeman: None, except as part of the privatisation of British Rail.

Navigator Systems

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about his decision to replace the Decca navigator system with Loran C.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport announced in April of last year his decision in principle, and subject to certain conditions, to replace the Decca navigator system with Loran C as the standard marine radionavigation system to be provided in United Kingdom waters into the next century, a number of representations have been received.

The fishing industry, the Master Mariners Association and others have argued against the adoption of Loran C chiefly because of the extra expense and inconvenience to which the proposed change would put the users of radionavigational systems at a time when increased reliance is likely to be placed on satellite systems. The electronics engineering industry have expressed concern because of their view that a high percentage of Loran C equipment would be imported from Japan and from the United States of America and that the market for Decca receivers in Europe would be lost.

The general lighthouse authorities have expressed their support for Loran C because they consider it to be a more effective system and have the potential to provide near global coverage. The Royal Yachting Association has expressed its support for Loran C as a single system which would be available throughout Europe and in many other parts of the world. The General Council of British

Shipping and the Lights Advisory Committee regard Loran C as having a higher technical performance but support whichever system would be the cheaper for payers of light dues.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library full information relating to the Loran C proposal.

Mr. McLoughlin: The proposals for a north-West European Loran C system were set out in the Department of Transport's consultative document of June 1989, entitled "The future of marine radionavigation in United Kingdom waters", a copy of which was placed in the Library at that time. Subsequent changes to the proposed station configurations and technical parameters have been relatively minor. The costs which would fall to be met by the United Kingdom are now estimated to be £8·5 million for investment and £0·6 million a year running costs, both at 1990-91 prices.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library all information relating to the submission from Racal Decca to continue to operate Decca, including the cost and the proposals to refurbish and upgrade existing equipment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The proposals which Racal Marine put forward in 1988 for the automation and continued operation of the Decca navigator chains in the United Kingdom have been superceded by further proposals put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 30 April this year. Negotiations are continuing and it would not be appropriate at this stage to place details in the Library.

Motorway Speed Limits

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of *(a)* the number of users of British roads who used roads in France in the past year and *(b)* the number of users of French roads who used roads in the United Kingdom in the past year; and if he will consider an adjustment in motorway speed limits to bring the United Kingdom into line with France.

Mr. Chope: During 1990 approximately 5 million British registered vehicles travelled to France and 1·5 million French registered vehicles travelled to Britain. I am looking at all speed limits, including that on motorways. The motorway speed limit for cars in France is amongst the highest in the European Community; the rate of motorway fatalities is 9·1 per 100 million vehicle kilometres in France whereas in the United Kingdom it is 6·3 per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

A38

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his Department's options for the A38 trunk road improvement between Saltash and Trerulefoot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department's consultants are making good progress with their investigations into possible options for the improvement of the A38 between Saltash and Trerulefoot.

I still hope that we shall be able to consult the public on the more favourable options towards the end of next year. The difficult topography and the environmentally sensitive countryside militates against more rapid progress.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings he has held with representatives of the people of Haringey and Islington concerning the operation of red routes; what meetings he plans to have; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Ministers and officials have met hon. Members, borough councillors, delegations of local business people, and groups representing local interests about the pilot red route scheme. Officials have also attended a number of public meetings in both boroughs. Requests for further meetings will be considered on their merits.

Marine Rescue

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many occasions in the last six months the International Maritime Organisation requirements have been breached by a failure to maintain the minimum staffing level of two fully trained regular officers and one auxiliary at any marine rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The International Maritime Organisation requires contracting Governments to provide adequate search and rescue services for persons in distress around their coasts. At no time during the last six months has the United Kingdom failed to meet these requirements.

Underused Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the location of each site and its acreage of the unused and underused land held by his Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: Each of the Department's highway regions is responsible for compiling an annual register of unused and underused land in its area at 31 March.

Under the Government's code of practice, the register is available at the 9 regional offices for inspection by the public from 30 June onwards. The information is being collated centrally and I shall place the returns in the Library when they are available at the end of the month.

Road Accidents, Paisley

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many pedestrians in each standard age cohort were fatally injured in road accidents for each year since 1980 in the constituency of Paisley, North.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

Information is not readily available for Paisley, North constituency and instead the requested information is given for Renfrew district in the following table.

Pedestrians fatally injured in road accidents in Renfrew district by age group for years 1980 to 1990

Age group	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	[1]1990
Under five	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2	2
5-9	3	1	2	1	—	1	3	1	1	—	—
10-14	—	1	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	3	—
15-19	—	1	2	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	1
20-24	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	1
25-29	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
30-39	1	—	2	2	—	2	1	1	—	1	—
40-49	—	2	—	3	1	1	2	1	1	—	—
50-59	1	3	—	3	—	—	1	—	2	—	2
60 and over	8	2	4	5	5	2	5	5	1	4	2
All ages	13	10	11	16	9	6	15	10	6	11	9

[1]Provisional.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what applications the Overseas Development Administration has received for internal purchase of grain in Tigray and Eritrea; on what grounds these applications have been accepted or rejected; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Where internal purchase of grain offers a cost effective and timely means of providing food to those in need I am willing to consider funding proposals from British voluntary agencies. I would also need to be sure that the distribution can be adequately monitored and accountability for the public funds involved would be fully assured. We have received proposals from Oxfam and CAFOD—Catholic Fund for Overseas Development.

These agencies have agreed to review their proposals to take account of the effects of recent developments in Ethiopia on the relief operation, including the internal purchase scheme. I await their revised applications.

Kedung Ombo Dam, Java

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the United Kingdom executive director at the World bank is taking to ensure adequate compensation is paid to those people displaced by the Kedung Ombo dam in central Java; what estimates he has of the number of people still living in the dam area; and whether Her Majesty's Government were represented at the opening of the dam on 18 May.

Mrs. Chalker: Compensation is essentially a matter between those concerned and the Government of Indonesia. Reliable estimates of numbers are difficult to come by, but I understand that some 5,000 families have accepted compensation and moved, and that 500-600 families remain in the green belt around the Kendung Ombo dam area. Her Majesty's Government were not represented at the opening of the dam.

Narmada Dam, India

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has concerning the size of opposition to the displacement of people and flooding of land as part of the World bank Narmada dam project in India;

(2) if he will make it his policy to instruct the United Kingdom's World bank executive director to support the proposal of local non-governmental organisations to institute an independent commission to investigate the Narmada dam project in India and to halt construction pending its findings;

(3) if he is satisfied that the environmental and social conditions drawn up by the World bank and the Government of India for the Narmada dam project will be met by the 30 June deadline; and whether he will make it his policy to refuse to extend United Kingdom support for the project if the deadline is not met.

Mrs. Chalker: I am not in a position to gauge the size of the opposition to the Sardar Sarovar dam project. At our suggestion and that of other donors the World Bank and the Indian authorities have agreed to appoint an independent team to assess the resettlement and environment aspects. So far as I am aware, the Indian authorities do not intend to halt construction during this review, if it goes ahead.

The deadline of 30 June applies to a related water delivery and drainage project, the future of which is under review by the World bank.

Motorway Speed Limits

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with chief constables and others about the current level of speed limits on motorways.

Mr. Chope: I will answer this question shortly.

WALES

Pain Relief

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pain relief consultants there are within national health service hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Currently there are two consultants in Wales in the specialty of palliative medicine. Pain relief work is also carried out by many anaesthetists, but information on the amount of time devoted to pain relief by those consultants is not available centrally. However, the majority of district general hospitals in Wales have a specialist interested in the relief of chronic pain.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will facilitate the establishment of a pain relief clinic in Gwynedd; and what discussions he has had with the Gwynedd health authority on this matter.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A pain relief clinic is already available at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics relating to pain relief are collected by the Welsh Office from national health service hospitals in Wales; what proposals he has to improve the available analysis of such statistics; and if he will ensure that the activity of pain clinics is incorporated in hospital activity analysis in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Welsh Office collects quarterly information relating to hospital bed use and out-patient activity by specialty. This information is published annually in "Hospital Bed Use Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House. Between January 1979 and March 1989 information relating to pain relief was collected and published as above. For the financial year 1989-90 pain relief work undertaken by palliative medicine consultants and anaesthetists was not separately identifiable from their other work. Since 1 April 1990, however, data on pain relief work done under both specialties have been collected as a separate category and will be included in published data for 1990-91 later this year.

The hospital activity analysis system relates only to patients admitted to hospital and as such does not include the activity of out-patient pain clinics.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what equipment is available in NHS hospitals in Wales for the relief of pain, including self-administered pain relief equipment; and what plans he has for extending such availability.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally. It is for local health authority managements to determine the availability of equipment in the light of local needs and circumstances, having regard to available resources.

Community Charge

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total amount of community charge unpaid in Wales since its inception.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Local authorities in Wales would receive some £414 million if all 1990-91 community charge bills were paid in full. Latest estimates suggest that they will receive around £389 milion of this, representing 94 per cent. of the full amount due. It is for local authorities to seek full payment of outstanding amounts in order to protect the interests of charge payers generally.

Treatment Centres

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how long he is proposing to extend or renew the present contract for the elective orthopaedics treatment centre at the Prince of Wales Orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar, Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The existing treatment centres have annual contracts.

Decisions on future funding will be taken in the light of experience during 1991-92, but it is not intended that central funding should continue indefinitely.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evaluation he has carried out of the impact on waiting lists for elective surgery of the three present treatment centres at Bridgend, Bangor and Rhydlafar; and if he will place copies of such evaluations in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is intended to undertake a wider evaluation of the treatment centre initiative during 1991. The existing centres have been broadly successful in meeting their contractual targets and are proving an effective complementary method of delivering speedier health care for Welsh patients.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what length of contract is proposed for the second ophthalmology treatment centre for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The established treatment centres are managed on annual contracts. Decisions on the future funding of the existing centres will be taken in the light of experience during 1991-92. The contract for the proposed new centre at Bridgend will make allowance for referral patterns to become established, but it is not intended that central funding should continue indefinitely.

"Local Strategies for Health"

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will now publish a review of achievement of the strategic objectives specified by the Welsh Office in the circular "Local Strategies for Health", and associated publications on the strategic intent and direction for the NHS in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Our approach to health strategy has been acknowledged by the World Health Organisation and others as putting Wales at the forefront of the drive for better health not only in the United Kingdom but in Europe.

District health authorities and family health services authorities are currently working with community health councils, local government and voluntary groups to prepare local strategies for health aimed at achieving our long-term goal of making Wales one of the healthiest nations in Europe. The first set of local strategies will be submitted to the Department for approval in December.

When the local strategies are available and we have drawn on them to develop a management strategy for Wales as a whole, we will be in a position to monitor progress against the ambitious targets set both locally and nationally.

M4 Flyover

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take in co-operation with West Glamorgan county council to protect pedestrians from objects falling from the Ynysforgan flyover of the M4 motorway.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Design work is currently under way on alterations to the Ynysforgan flyover parapets where the motorway passes over the footbridge. Parapet heights will be increased and a mesh infill provided over a length of 30m in the vicinity of the footbridge.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to reimburse Swansea city council for the £50,000 spent and thrown away on sending out new poll tax bills following the Government's change in policy.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Department is in consultation with the Council of Welsh Districts on reimbursement arrangements.

Acute Hospital Beds

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of acute hospital beds available in Wales for each of the years 1979 to 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the number of acute hospital beds is given in the following table. In order to give the full picture on trends I have added the figures from 1974-79:

Average daily available acute beds: Wales[1]

	Number
1974	10,880
1975	10,552
1976	10,378
1977	10,425
1978	10,274
1979	10,133
1980	10,075
1981	9,971
1982	9,949
1983	9,992
1984	9,836
1985	9,810
1986	9,640
1987	9,557
1988	9,472
1989-90[2]	9,049

[1] Excludes geriatrics, younger disabled, obstetrics, GP maternity, mental illness, mental handicap, adolescent psychiatry, mental illness children, psychogeriatric and elderly mentally infirm.

[2] Data from 1 April 1989 are readily available only on a financial year basis.

Children in Care

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has of how many children were in care in the area of the Llanelli borough council at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information is held centrally only on the numbers of children in care by county area. There were 275 children in care in Dyfed on 31 March 1990.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children were in local authority care in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There were 3,278 children in local authority care in Wales on 31 March 1990.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in local authority care in Wales at the latest available date were in *(a)* residential care and *(b)* under the care of foster parents.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There were 585 children in local authority care in residential accommodation on 31 March 1990. Of these, 569 were in local authority community homes and the remaining 16 in registered voluntary homes and hostels.

There were 1,994 children in local authority care with foster parents on 31 March 1990.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children were in care in *(a)* Dyfed, *(b)* West Glamorgan and *(c)* Mid-Glamorgan at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There were 275 children in care in Dyfed, 365 in West Glamorgan and 757 in Mid Glamorgan on 31 March 1990.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of fostering children in Wales in the last three available years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Expenditure by local authorities on boarded-out children in care in Wales since 1987-88 is given in the following table:

Net current expenditure £ million[1]

1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
5·4	5·9	6·8

[1] Expenditure on employees and running expenses net of sales, fees, charges and other local income, but gross of relevant specific grants.

Right to Buy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the percentage of housing stock sold under right-to-buy schemes by each district authority in Wales in total since 1980.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is given in the following table:

Total right-to-buy sales as a percentage of local authority stock at 1981

	per cent.
Aberconwy	42
Alyn and Deeside	26
Arfon	23
Blaenau Gwent	20
Brecknock	37
Cardiff	30
Carmarthen[1]	5
Ceredigion	35
Colwyn[2]	0
Cynon Valley	23
Delyn	21
Dinefwr	29
Dwyfor	23
Glyndwr	32
Islwyn	41
Llanelli	36
Lliw Valley	31
Meirionnydd	32
Merthyr Tydfil	26
Monmouth	31
Montgomeryshire	33
Neath	32
Newport	26
Ogwr	35
Port Talbot	39
Preseli Pembrokeshire	31
Radnorshire	37
Rhondda	14
Rhuddlan	29
Rhymney Valley	29
South Pembrokeshire	23
Swansea	20
Taff-Ely	39
Torfaen	37
Vale of Glamorgan	31
Wrexham Maelor	20
Ynys Mon	25
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[1] Many of the disposals of dwellings by Carmarthen District Council, are made voluntarily rather than under the Right-to-Buy scheme.

[2] All of the disposals of the dwellings by Colwyn District Council are made voluntarily rather than under the Right-to-Buy scheme.

Source: Local authority returns, 1981 Census of Population.

Population Movements

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the number of young people moving from Wales to England, *(b)* the number of young people moving from England to Wales and *(c)* the net outflow for the year between September 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Data from the national health service central register, which relates to movements of persons on national health service doctors' lists, give an indication of the number of young people moving between Wales and England. This information is given in the following table:

National health service central register moves of young people from Wales to England and England to Wales for year ended September 1990

Age	From Wales to England (a)	From England to Wales (b)	Net outflow from Wales (c)
0–15	6,500	7,800	−1,300
16–24	14,600	13,300	+1,300

Source: OPCS.

Note: These figures, which are rounded to the nearest 100, relate to re-registrations for year ended December 1990. This is to make an allowance for an average of three months between a person moving and subsequent re-registration.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the latest available estimates of the number of Welsh language learners currently residing in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Farm Employment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers, partners, directors and farmworkers were employed by county in Wales in June 1980.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures from the agricultural census for June 1980 are given in the following table:

Numbers of farmers and workers employed in agriculture—June 1980

County	Whole-time			Part-time			Total farmers and directors	All workers (excluding salaried managers)			Salaried managers
	Principal farmers	Other partners	Total	Principal farmers	Other partners	Total		Male	Female	Total	
Clwyd	2,664	631	3,295	630	317	947	4,245	2,768	707	3,475	86
Dyfed	7,657	1,664	9,321	1,677	810	2,487	11,808	5,769	1,890	7,659	66
Gwent	1,429	282	1,711	390	220	610	2,321	1,310	407	1,717	28
Gwynedd	3,046	621	3,667	845	369	1,214	4,881	2,189	382	2,571	61
Mid Glamorgan	604	121	725	175	93	268	993	719	121	840	4
Powys	4,014	1,016	5,030	654	407	1,061	6,091	2,841	472	3,313	29
South Glamorgan	369	98	467	67	46	113	580	506	138	644	17
West Glamorgan	519	137	656	186	68	254	910	512	113	625	9
Wales	20,302	4,570	24,872	4,624	2,330	6,954	31,826	16,614	4,230	20,844	300

Note: Figures exclude minor holdings not included in the June census.
Source: June Agricultural Census 1980.

Adoption

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the children adopted in Wales in the last three available years were 10 years of age and over.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the following table:

	Number of adoption orders[1]	Number of children adopted aged 10 years or over	Percentage of children adopted aged 10 years or over
1987	442	116	26·2
1988[2]	463	141	30·4
1989[3]	436	128	29·4

Source: OPCS
[1] Period January to December
[2] Five adoption orders did not specify the age of the child and have therefore been omitted from these figures.
[3] One adoption order did not specify the age of the child and has therefore been omitted from these figures.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many adoption orders were made in Wales in each of the last three available years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of adoption orders made in Wales in each of the last three available years is given in the following table:

Year	Number of adoption orders[1]
1987	442
1988	468
1989	437

Source: OPCS
[1] Period January to December

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage of the children adopted in Wales in each of the last three available years were legitimate children;

(2) what percentage of the adoptions in Wales in the last three available years were made without parental agreement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally.

Cancer

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will sponsor an investigation into the incidence of cancer, by type, by location and by age group of the sufferer, in the district of Taff Ely.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The latest available figures published in "Cancer Registration in Wales: 1974-1984" indicate that the standardised cancer registration rate for all malignancies in Taff Ely is below the Wales average. I therefore see no reason for the Welsh Office to undertake such an investigation.

A470

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest existing and projected estimates of traffic flow along the A470 by vehicle type.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following tables:

The current annual average daily traffic flows on the sections of A470 between Coryton and Abercynon are estimated as follows:

Section	*Cars*	*Light goods*	*Heavy goods*	*Buses*	*Total*
Coryton—Ynys Bridge	36,600	4,300	3,900	400	45,200
Ynys Bridge—Nantgarw	37,400	4,450	3,600	300	45,750
Nantgarw—Upper Boat	33,000	3,400	2,750	350	39,500
Upper Boat—Glyntaff	37,300	3,150	2,200	300	42,950
Glyntaff—Bridge St.	28,800	3,250	2,200	300	34,550
Bridge St.—Abercynon	22,750	2,400	2,350	500	27,900
Projections for the year to 2005 are:					
(a) on Low Growth estimates					
Coryton—Ynys Bridge	48,150	5,700	4,700	400	58,950
Ynys Bridge—Nantgarw	49,200	5,900	4,350	300	59,750
Nantgarw—Upper Boat	43,400	4,500	3,300	350	51,550
Upper Boat—Glyntaff	49,100	4,200	2,650	300	56,250
Glyntaff—Bridge St.	37,900	4,300	2,650	300	45,150
Bridge St.—Abercynon	29,900	3,200	2,850	500	36,450
(b) on High Growth estimates					
Coryton—Ynys Bridge	55,800	6,850	5,550	400	68,500
Ynys Bridge—Nantgarw	57,000	7,100	5,100	300	69,500
Nantgarw—Upper Boat	50,300	5,400	3,900	350	59,950
Upper Boat—Glyntaff	56,900	5,000	3,100	300	65,300
Glyntaff—Bridge St.	43,900	5,200	3,100	300	52,500
Bridge St.—Abercynon	34,700	3,800	3,350	500	42,350

Pontypridd-Cardiff Railway

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the average numbers of passengers carried by British Rail daily on the Pontypridd to Cardiff branch of its network in *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for British Rail.

Arts Buildings

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of those buildings used for the arts in Wales which have been built, renovated or improved with Government funds since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on funding allocated for these purposes by the Welsh Office is given in the following tables.

Specific Grants

St. David's Hall, Cardiff—£300,000 in 1978-79, £500,000 in 1979-80 and £200,000 in 1980-81 towards the cost of building the Hall.

Welsh National Opera—£150,000 in 1981-82 towards cost of constructing new rehearsal facilities:

Urban Programme

Financial year	*Name of premises*	*Work assisted*	*Allocation £*
1980-81	Blaenavon Workmen's Institute	Renovation Work	4,500
1981-82	Congress Theatre, Torfaen	Provision of Toilets	5,750
	Blackwood Little Theatre	Roof Repairs	8,000
1984-85	Afan Arts Centre Port Talbot	Re-roofing and Refurbishment	30,000
	Rhymney Valley Museum	Work of Galleries	40,000
	Blackwood Miners Welfare Association Hall	Renovation Work	11,000
1986-87	Blackwood Little Theatre	Refurbishment Phase I	25,000
1988-91	Parc and Dare Hall, Treorchy	Upgrading of front facade, entrance and foyer; facilities for disabled; construction of raked floor in auditorium and improvements to stage	500,000

Financial year	Name of premises	Work assisted	Allocation £
1988-91	Blaenavon Institute (opened 1894)	Structural conservation work inside and out. New foyer, staircase, replacement seating, installation of theatrical equipment	800,000
1989-91	Blackwood Institute	Major structural internal and external work carried out; acquisition of building	635,000
1989-91	Pontypridd Municipal Hall	Visual arts gallery and cinema, external refurbishment and landscaping work outside building	200,000
1989-90	Rhydycar Leisure Centre	The installation of retractable seating for major events instead of hiring seating at considerable cost	135,000
1989-92	Blaengarw Workman's Hall (built 1894)	Major structural work carried out on the enveloping of the building and internal work; also the installation of central heating system	853,000
1989-92	Coliseum Theatre Trecynon (built 1938)	Extend orchestra pit and refurbish building; purchase of building from Charitable Trust	548,000
1989-92	Ystradgynlais Miners' Welfare Hall	Development of Hall into Arts and Social Centre	657,000
		Revenue allocation for manager and part-time staff to manage and develop use of facilities	
1991-92	Lyric Theatre Carmarthen	Improvement of facilities	120,000

Projects of regional or national importance

Financial year	Project	Supplementary credit approval
1990-91	Llangollen International Eisteddfod Site. New Pavilion	£433,000
1991-92	Llangollen International Eisteddfod Site. New Pavilion	£1,390,000

Information about funds disbursed by centrally funded agencies is not held centrally. I will write to the hon. Member with this information.

The total allocation to the National Museum of Wales for all capital works at its branches was:

Financial year	Amount £
1979-80	1,087,000
1980-81	786,000
1981-82	619,000
1982-83	799,000
1983-84	657,000
1984-85	711,000
1985-86	995,000
1986-87	924,000
1987-88	2,123,000
1988-89	3,630,000
1989-90	6,499,000
1990-91	7,820,000

Housing Standards

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of houses, by district, in Mid Glamorgan which are below minimum required standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The numbers of unfit dwellings in the districts of Mid Glamorgan as estimated by the 1986 Welsh house condition survey are given in the following table:

District	Total number of unfit dwellings
Cynon Valley	4,400
Merthyr Tydfil	2,500
Ogwr	3,900
Rhondda	4,900
Rhymney Valley	2,100
Taff Ely	2,700

Source: 1986 Welsh House Condition Survey.

Special Diets

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales, by county, are registered as needing special diets because of physical or mental disabilities; how many of them are eligible for the new lower care component of the disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Eligibility for disabled living allowance is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Public Transport Expenditure

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications since 1985 his Office has received for section 56 grants under the Transport Act 1968; how many of these applications have been provided, wholly or in part; and if he will name in each case the project concerned, the level of support provided and the date on which the grant application was approved.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has received no applications under this provision.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Import Restrictions

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the quotas on imports from *(a)* Thailand and *(b)* Vietnam for (i) bed linens, (ii) yarn

fabric, (iii) sewing thread, (iv) curtains, (v) shirts, (vi) porcelain tableware, (vii) matches, (viii) footwear, (ix) gloves, (x) headgear and (xi) trousers.

Mr. Sainsbury: Restrictions on the imports of yarns, sewing threads, fabrics, shirts, gloves and trousers originating in Thailand under the EC-Thailand MFA bilateral agreement are shown in table 1.

The import to the United Kingdom of bedlinen, curtains, porcelain tableware, matches, footwear, and headgear originating in Thailand is not restricted by quota.

Restrictions on the import of goods originating in Vietnam are set out in table 2.

Table 1

Product	*United Kingdom quota level (1991)*
Synthetic spun yarns (MFA category 22) (includes some sewing threads)	425 tonnes
Cotton fabrics (MFA category 2)	1,108 tonnes
Fabrics of synthetic spun yarns (MFA category 3)	2,226 tonnes
T-shirts, knitted shirts etc. (MFA category 4)	5,539,000 pieces
Men's and boy's woven shirts (MFA category 8)	251,000 pieces
Woven trousers (MFA category 6)	395,000 pieces
Knitted gloves (MFA category 10)	2,726,000 pairs

Table 2

Product	*Quota level (notes) (1991)*
Tableware of porcelain, china or pottery; ornaments or statuettes	£23,100
Bedlinen, tablelinen, curtains, synthetic yarn and woven fabrics of synthetic yarn (MFA categories 20, 23, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40)	7 tonnes[1]
Shirts	Import ban[2]
Matches	Import ban
Footwear	Import ban[3]
Gloves	Import ban
Headgear	Import ban[4]
Trousers	Import ban[5]

[1] Certain of these goods of flax, ramie, hemp or silk are unrestricted. Goods of this description of textile categories other than those listed are subject to an import ban.
[2] Shirts of ramie or of silk are unrestricted.
[3] Certain casual footwear (eg espadrilles) is unrestricted.
[4] Certain headgear (eg straw hats and the like) is unrestricted.
[5] Certain trousers for industrial wear are unrestricted.

Note: Full details of import licensing requirements are set out in the Open General Import Licence dated 4th December 1987.

Kuwait (Contracts)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), 5 June, *Official Report*, column 264, if he will state, so far as is known to his Department, the number of companies which have won contracts in Kuwait, and the number and value of contracts won by companies employing fewer than 20 people.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am aware of 52 companies which have won contracts in Kuwait with a total of at least £190 million. One of these companies has fewer than 20 employees and has won a contract worth £500,000.

It is not possible to determine how many companies with fewer than 20 employees will benefit from sub-contracts.

Baltic States

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further initiatives are currently being taken by his Department to promote bilateral trade between the United Kingdom and the Baltic republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Overseas trade services staff in the United Kingdom and Moscow provide a range of export promotion services for the Soviet Union, including the Baltic republics.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the record of export promotion by the British embassy in Moscow in relation to each of the Baltic republics over each of the last five years; and if he will place in the Library a list of companies in the United Kingdom who are exporting to any one or more of the Baltic states, with details of the goods involved and the gross value of the trade.

Mr. Sainsbury: Overseas trade services staff in Moscow are undertaking a series of visits to regions of the Soviet Union with commercial potential for British companies, including the Baltic republics.

The names of companies involved in trade to the Baltic republics, their products and their value is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Overseas trade statistics are compiled on a country basis and cannot be broken down by republic.

Rechar

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what benefit he expects for coalfield areas to derive from the EC Rechar scheme.

Mr. Leigh: The 11 United Kingdom Rechar programmes, submitted in July 1990 and currently awaiting approval by the European Commission, seek some £109 million in EC support for a wide range of infrastructure and small firms measures based on the Commission guidelines published in the Official Journal of 27 January 1990. The actual projects to be supported will be decided once the programmes are approved.

ENVIRONMENT

Greenhouse Gases

17. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases in Britain.

Mr. Trippier: The White Paper on the Environment, "This Common Inheritance", which was published last September describes Britain's strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sets out the first tranche of measures to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Planning Consent

18. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to allow councils to penalise those who build properties or extensions without planning consent.

Mr. Yeo: Yes, Sir. My right hon. Friend has introduced provisions in the Planning and Compensation Bill which greatly strengthen and improve local planning authorities' power to deal with breaches of planning control.

Local Government Finance

20. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had on the timescale for phasing out the poll tax.

Mr. Portillo: We have said that we plan to replace the community charge with the council tax with effect from 1 April 1993.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the abolition of the poll tax 20 per cent. contribution rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We have recently proposed a new council tax to take effect in 1993. It will be possible for people on low incomes to receive 100 per cent. rebates on the council tax. However, we have not proposed any change to the benefit rules for the remaining period of the community charge.

25. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make further adjustments to standard spending assessment mechanisms.

Mr. Portillo: The standard spending assessments are based on detailed research. They have been subject to extensive review over the last two years. Stability is an important consideration in this area to enable sensible forward planning by authorities. The Government have no proposals for any major changes, although data from the 1991 census will be incorporated into the SSAs as soon as possible after they become available.

Councillors' Allowances

21. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to carry out consultations with local authority organisations on the councillors' allowances scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department has worked closely with the local authority associations in drawing up the new system of members' allowances which took effect from 1 April this year. The new system will be reviewed after a year's operation in consultation with the associations.

Broader issues are being considered in the review of local government.

Housing

24. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he is making with respect to the encouragement of the further provision of affordable housing in non-metropolitan district council areas.

Sir George Young: Development of low-cost housing for rent or shared ownership sale is rising substantially as a result of increases in public expenditure through the Housing Corporation to over £2 billion by 1993-94. We have also reviewed the way resources are allocated to ensure the houses are built where they are most needed, and introduced special programmes to help rural areas. The fall in house prices and reductions in interest rates have eased access to housing for first-time buyers, and deregulation of private rents has helped make more houses available for rent.

31. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have carried out a large-scale voluntary transfer of some or all of their housing to a new landlord.

Sir George Young: Sixteen local authorities have so far transferred their housing stock to new, approved landlords, following a ballot of tenants. These transfers have involved 76,000 homes, have generated £647 million in receipts and have enabled local authorities to repay £400 million worth of debt. Altogether the transfers have attracted over £1 billion of private sector investment in social housing.

28. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that local authorities bring back empty council properties into use as soon as possible.

Sir George Young: We have taken a number of steps to reduce the number of empty local authority properties. In particular, under the £300 million homelessness initiative more than 5,300 empty local authority properties in London and the South East will be brought back into use; £1,076 million of credit approvals will be made available this year towards the renovation of local authority stock and the housing revenue account subsidy rules have been changed to give authorities a better incentive to bring empty properties back into use.

Vacant Land

26. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of public vacant and derelict land he estimates as accumulating since he stopped updating the central register of vacant public land.

Mr. Yeo: Because of the incomplete response by owners and changes in the minimum size of site there is no basis for making such an estimate. We are proposing steps to improve the response as my hon. Friend was told on 7 May at column *401*.

Roads

27. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are taken to ensure that the allocation of resources to local government is adequate to ensure that local authority roads are kept in an acceptable state of repair.

Mr. Key: Local authority standard spending assessments include, where appropriate, adequate provision for highway maintenance.

Greenwich Social Services

29. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what determines the standard spending assessment on social services for Greenwich borough council.

Mr. Portillo: The method of allocating the standard spending assessment for social services is set out in the

Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) as amended by the Revenue Support Grant (Amendment) Report (England) which was approved by the House in January this year. The same method is used for Greenwich as for all other social services authorities in England.

Dog Licensing

30. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had any recent discussions with the RSPCA about dog licensing.

Mr. Baldry: My officials have regular discussions with the Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society, which includes RSPCA representatives, on matters relating to responsible dog ownership and to the implementation of the package of dog control measures contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. We will introduce the dog control measures next year. They include a duty on local authorities to enforce the requirement that dogs wear a collar and identification tag when in a public place and to ensure that stray dogs are collected up. We believe that the measures will encourage responsible ownership and directly address the main problems caused by dogs; whereas a national dog licensing or registration scheme would be bureaucratic, expensive to operate and ineffective.

Uncollected Rents

32. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of uncollected council housing rents at the last count.

Mr. Yeo: At the end of March 1990 English local authorities were owed an estimated £360 million in rent arrears.

Figures for the position in March 1991 are not yet available.

Hadrian's Wall

34. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the steps taken to preserve Hadrian's wall.

Mr. Yeo: Hadrian's wall is a scheduled ancient monument. As such, it is protected by the need to obtain the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for any works within the scheduled area, in addition to any planning permission required.

Wind Farms

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning permissions for wind farms have been approved in England and in Wales during the two most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

Releases of Radioactivity

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority released radioactivity to the environment since 1961 at levels that would have been subject to prosecution under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, prior to Crown immunity being withdrawn.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) has never been subject to Crown immunity under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (RSA 60) for the disposal of radioactive waste. Disposals from UKAEA premises are closely regulated by means of certificates of authorisation issued under RSA 60 by HMIP and where appropriate jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, backed up by inspection of premises.

The only prosecution by HMIP under RSA 60 against UKAEA was on 5 June 1991 when the authority pleaded guilty to two breaches of conditions in its certificate of authorisation. We are not aware of any other releases of radioactivity which would have rendered the authority liable to prosecution.

Pollution Registers

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out those areas of corporate information on pollution that will be excluded from deposition in the local register on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to define exhaustively the areas of information which should be excluded on grounds of commercial confidentiality. Under section 22 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the onus is on the operator to prove to the enforcing authority that disclosure of information would prejudice to an unreasonable degree their commercial interests—and every case will have to be considered on its merits.

Estate Action

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what approvals he intends to give for estate action funds for the refurbishment of the St. Martin's estate, Tulse Hill, London SW2.

Mr. Yeo: The Department did not offer estate action support for 1991-92 to Lambeth council towards the cost of its proposed work on the St. Martin's estate as the application failed to satisfy the objectives of the programme. No other application is being considered. The Department would be willing to consider a new bid for this estate in a future year, but approval would depend on the quality of the proposed scheme in competition with other bids received.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the budget for the estate action programme in the current year.

Sir George Young: The estate action budget for 1991-92 is £268 million.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figure he has included in his budget for granting aid to the National Rivers Authority for *(a)* the current financial year, *(b)* 1992-93 and *(c)* 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: Grant-in-aid for the current year is £106·5 million. Planned provision for 1992-93 and 1993-94 of £96·9 million and £96 million respectively, as published in the Department's annual report 1991 (Cm. 1508), is subject to the Government's public expenditure decisions which will be announced later this year.

Building (Heating)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given by his Department to the recommendation of the Technical Services Agency, that the law requiring the heating of buildings to a minimum of 16 deg. C should be extended to set a similar minimum temperature for housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The standard of fitness for human habitation (section 604 of the Housing Act 1985 as amended by schedule 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) requires that a dwelling-house shall have adequate provision for heating. Circular 6/90 advises that in deciding whether a dwelling-house is or is not unfit, an authority should consider whether the dwelling-house has provision for heating capable of generally maintaining the living room at a temperature of 18 deg. C or more and the other main rooms at a minimum of 16 deg. C.

Community Charge

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the amount of community charge payable by each eligible adult in a household of one, two, three, four or five adults where one, two or no adults have been exempted due to severe mental handicap in 1991-92 after the community charge reduction scheme has been applied, for each level of assumed rates in £50 bands from £150 to £500, in £100 bands from £500 to £1,500, £1,750 and £2,000, where in each case the community charge is set at each £10 increment between £140 and £600.

Mr. Key: I have today placed in the Library tables showing the information requested. The tables relate to the number of adults in a property who are not exempt from the community charge.

If there are people in a property who are exempt from the community charge for any reason, these people are disregarded in the calculation of the community charge reduction available to other occupants.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department is taking to encourage recycling by local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires all waste collection authorities to prepare recycling plans. We have issued guidance on how to draw up the plans for consultation. We have also distributed £12 million of supplementary credit approvals for 1991-92 to enable local authorities to invest in recycling. This will add significantly to measures already in place to encourage recycling.

Homelessness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to introduce new initiatives to reduce the number of homeless people in Britain.

Sir George Young: All those accepted as homeless by local authorities are provided with accommodation. For the relatively small numbers who are literally homeless, we have allocated £96 million over three years to central London; and we are considering the possibility of extending the initiative to other parts of the country.

Derelict Land

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has completed his review of derelict land policy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have today arranged for copies of a derelict land grant advice note setting out the Government's new priorities and objectives for derelict land grant (DLG) to be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons.

The new policies set out in the advice note represent the culmination of the Review of Derelict Land Policy which has been carried out by the Department following the announcement by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to the House on 20 July 1988. There have been extensive consultations with local authorities and other interested bodies.

The national priorities and objectives of DLG have been redefined to enable support to be given to the reclamation of sites for both development and environmental improvement. Priority will be given to the treatment of sites which are causing major environmental damage, particularly those which are badly contaminated. We have also enhanced the grant regime available to the private and voluntary sectors.

These changes go hand in hand with the 23 per cent. increase in resources for DLG in 1991-92 which I announced in a reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 7 February 1991 at column *226*. The Government's aim is to broaden the scope of DLG as a nation wide grant for the reclamation of derelict land and to make the grant regime more flexible and attractive. This will speed up the rate at which derelict land is reclaimed and returned to an appropriate use for the benefit of the local community.

In urban areas priority will be given to recycling land for development where there is a proven demand for investment from the private sector but reclamation for environmental improvement will also be welcomed in order to improve the attractiveness of an area as a place for investment or in which to live or work. This will include, for example, promoting nature or historic conservation and community forests.

In rural areas, emphasis will be placed on reclamation in areas of particularly high scenic quality and on schemes to foster development having regard to local planning policies.

Local authorities will be encouraged to develop reclamation strategies in consultation with local interests involved in reclamation. The number of rolling programmes of reclamation which allow local authorities to plan their reclamation strategies for several years ahead will be increased.

A more attractive grant regime for the private sector and for voluntary bodies has also been introduced. A wider range of costs will be eligible for grant and voluntary bodies will be able to apply directly to the Department for grants to clear up neglected or unsightly land. Non-local authority DLG will also be re-introduced into the 57 urban programme areas.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each available year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, or the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Information on my Department's energy consumption prior to 1989-90 is not readily available. In 1989-90 energy expenditure, excluding the Property Services Agency, was as follows (expenditure in 1990-91 money terms shown in brackets):

	£	£
Electricity	1,593,562	(1,717,063)
Gas	831,377	(895,809)
Oil	362,696	(390,805)
Solid Fuel	4,003	(4,313)

Consumption relating to these was as follows

Kilowatt hours	34,000,000
Therms	2,600,000
Litres	3,300,000
Tonnes	70

The latest estimate of expenditure for 1990-91 which now includes Property Holdings is as follows (Property Holdings in Brackets):

	£	£
Electricity	1,866,340	(390,000)
Gas	766,932	(66,000)
Oil	427,949	(0)
Solid Fuel	1,500	(0)

Consumption relating to these was as follows:

Kilowatt hours	31,105,667	(6,500,000)
Therms	2,095,442	(180,500)
Litres	3,229,804	(0)
Tonnes	16	(0)

The area of accommodation relating to the 1990-91 figures is 1,303,197 square feet. This excludes specialised property such as the royal parks and palaces which are included in the expenditure and consumption figures but to which the concept of floor area is inappropriate.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he will make a statement on the number of disabled people who have been assisted in finding employment by his Department in each of the last 15 years?

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However the Employment Service keeps information on the placings of people with disabilities into employment. I have asked Mike Fogden, chief executive of the Employment Service executive agency, to write to my hon. Friend on this operational matter.

Radway Green Ordnance Factory

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies have been declared at the Radway Green ordnance factory in the last year.

Mr. Forth: Information given to the Department under the redundancy handling provisions of the Employment Protection Act 1975 is provided in confidence and remains confidential until made public by the company concerned.

Child Care

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry to encourage companies to develop child care provision within their organisation to assist women at work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The CBI is represented on the advisory committee on women's employment which I chair. Child care has been discussed on a number of occasions. I welcome all steps by the CBI and other employers' organisations to encourage the adoption of flexible working arrangements and help with child care to assist working parents.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of unemployed claimants in each constituency in the west midlands in April 1990 and April 1991; what was the percentage change in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Unemployment in the west midlands remains 30 per cent. below what it was at the time of the last general election.

Disabled Trainees

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *586*, if he will list the action taken by his Department to ensure that there is no discrimination against trainees with disabilities; and if he plans to introduce further legislative protection for trainees who suffer unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of disability.

Mr. Jackson: There is a range of measures to enable people with disabilities to benefit from Government training programmes. For example young people with disabilities remain eligible for a guaranteed place on youth training beyond 18 if their availability for YT has been delayed by the effects of their disability or health problem.

From April 1991 people with disabilities regardless of the length of time they had been unemployed, were included in the Government's aim group that offers a place on either ET, EAS at a job club or on the job interview guarantee programme.

People with disabilities can be supplied with appropriate facilities and support to enable them to join youth training and employment training and to pursue suitable training. This covers such items as adaptations to premises, special aids and equipment.

Training and enterprise councils are required to set out in their corporate and business plans how they intend to meet the training needs of people with disabilities. These plans form the basis of their contract with this Department.

We have no plans to introduce further legislative protection for trainees.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Business and Technician Education Council courses are financed through the TECs.

Mr. Jackson: TECs receive part of their funding from the Department of Employment for the achievement of NVQs and other equivalent qualifications acceptable to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. There are at present 222 BTEC qualifications so designated.

Careers Service

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the organisations from which he received a response to his Department's consultative paper on the future of the careers service; and, of these, how many commented specifically on the future of careers advice for young people with disabilities.

Mr. Jackson: Many organisations responded to my Department's consultation on the future of the careers service announced in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" (Cm. 1536). Those with an interest in providing services for people with disabilities were well represented in the responses. It is my intention to ensure that, however provision is organised, a high quality of careers service will be safeguarded everywhere.

Woodlee Employment Rehabilitation Centre

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the provision by Woodlee employment rehabilitation centre in Egham of residential assessment and rehabilitation for people with disabilities.

Mr. Jackson: The Secretary of State announced on 16 April, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) *Official Report*, columns *157-59*, that employment services for people with disabilities are to be improved and developed.

New local employment service teams will be established over the next 12 to 18 months to provide more professional advice, assessment and help in finding and keeping work for people with disabilities.

Greater use will be made of the voluntary sector and others to provide employment rehabilitation, including residential facilities, and nine employment service regional centres of excellence will be established over, approximately, the next five years.

Operational responsibility for the development of employment services for people with disabilities, including the future of the Egham employment rehabilitation centre, rests with the chief executive of the Employment Service executive agency, Mike Fogden, to whom I have referred the right hon. Gentleman's question for a more detailed reply.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* members and *(b)* chairs of industrial tribunals are black; what ethnic monitoring policy is in operation in respect of industrial tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is estimated that 51 lay members and 2 chairmen of the industrial tribunals are from the ethnic minorities. The number of lay members is monitored by asking applicants to give details of their ethnic origin. The monitoring of chairmen is a matter for the Lord Chancellor.

Job Clubs

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been issued to managers of job clubs in connection with visits by hon. Members and parliamentary spokesmen.

Mr. Howard: As an executive agency, the employment service is being encouraged to promote contact between hon. Members and their local ES offices.

In the case of proposed visits by parliamentary spokesmen to local offices or to ES programmes such as job clubs, officials are required to notify such requests to my office. I am keen that parliamentary spokesmen should have an opportunity to see ES operations at first hand and I have written to the hon. Member to explain the position.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Student Numbers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the student numbers in the bachelor of education degree, honours, in each year since 1988 in *(a)* Stranmillis college of education and *(b)* St. Mary's college of education, Belfast;

(2) what were the student numbers in the bachelor of education degree, general, in each year since 1988 in *(a)* Stranmillis college of education and *(b)* St. Mary's college of education, Belfast;

(3) what were the student numbers in the diploma in the advanced study of education in each year since 1988 in *(a)* Stranmillis college of education and *(b)* St. Mary's college of education, Belfast;

(4) what were the student numbers in the post-graduate diploma in education in each year since 1988 in *(a)* Stranmillis college of education and *(b)* St. Mary's college of education, Belfast and *(c)* Queen's university of Belfast.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers were:

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
(a) Stranmillis college			
BEd (Honours)	499	597	637
BEd (General)[1]	98	46	—
DASE[2]	69	70	58
PGCE[3]	67	63	55
PGCE (Hons) Psychology	3	6	6
(b) St. Mary's college			
BEd (Honours)	512	587	629
BEd (General)[1]	111	46	—
DASE[2]	78	99	94
PGCE	65	64	58

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Queen's university PGCE[3]	119	125	146

[1] 1987-88 was the last year of entry to the three-year general degree course. Since 1988-89 all BEd entrants have followed a four-year honours course.
[2] DASE figures represent the full-time equivalent student loan.
[3] The diploma in education was replaced by the postgraduate certificate in education in 1976.

Education (Finance)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the budgetary allocation to Stranmillis college of education and St. Mary's college of education in each year since 1988.

Dr. Mawhinney: The budgets for approved recurrent expenditure in the last three financial years were:

	Stranmillis college	St. Mary's college
1988-89	3,544	3,345
1989-90	3,836	3,709
1990-91	4,117	4,032

The figures represent gross expenditure, part of which is funded from tuition fee income.

Private Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many private residential and nursing homes are currently registered in the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards; and if he will list them.

Mr. Hanley: At 31 December 1990, the latest date for which information is held centrally, the numbers of nursing homes registered by the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards were 66 and 29, respectively.

At 31 March 1991, the latest date for which information is held centrally, the numbers of homes for persons in need, registered by the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards were 105 and 23, respectively.

As the list requested is very lengthy, I have arranged for a copy to be sent to the hon. Gentleman and for copies to be placed in the Library.

Eye Surgery

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what measures will be taken to reduce the waiting list for cataract operations at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast;

(2) what additional resources will be allocated to eye surgery at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: Additional funds of some £440,000 have been allocated to ophthalmology at the Royal Victoria hospital over the past two years. The funds allocated thus far have enabled an extra 600 procedures to be carried out during 1990-91, the great majority of which have been for cataracts. I hope to announce in the near future further additional funding for 1991-92 which should enable an additional 1,200 procedures to be carried out during 1991-92.

Better management of waiting lists also helps to reduce both their length and the waiting time. The Department therefore supports the initiatives by the clinical resource efficiency support team, a group of clinicians formed to promote clinical efficiency. The team has produced a guidance booklet on waiting list management. As a result, boards have been asked to draw up programmes of management action focusing in particular on those specialties which have the greatest problems.

Social Services Committee

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will announce the composition of the new Social Services Committee which replaces the district committees disbanded on 1 April.

Mr. Hanley: The chairmen of the four councils were announced on 4 April and I hope to be able to announce the membership within the next few weeks.

Eye Surgery

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cataract operations were carried out at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast in each year since 1 April 1985.

Mr. Hanley: Information is based on calendar years from 1985 to 1988 and on the financial year for 1989-90. The numbers are:

Year	Cataract operations
1985	959
1986	957
1987	1,329
1988	1,595
1989-90	1,552

Advance Factories

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at what locations there are unoccupied advance factories.

Mr. Needham: There are unoccupied advance factories at Antrim (technology park), Armagh, Ballymena, Bangor, Belfast (Adelaide), Craigavon, Londonderry (Springtown), Newtownards and Strabane.

Ryan Park, Castlereagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reasons the Northern Ireland Housing Executive removed the play equipment from the play area at the rear of Ryan park in the borough of Castlereagh; and what proposals there are to provide play equipment for the children of this residential area.

Mr. Needham: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the Housing Executive has not removed any play equipment from the play area at the rear of Ryan park.

The Department of Environment has been unable to establish who removed it. However, I understand that Castlereagh borough council is now considering the provision of new play equipment for the children of the area.

Extradition (Irish Republic)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the persons who have been extradited for political offences since 1980 *(a)* from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland, giving the year in which the extradition occurred and indicating the outcome of the case.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The legislation effecting extradition between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland precludes extradition for a political offence.

Fair Employment

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland including staff transferred from the former Fair Employment Agency, how many members of the Fair Employment Commission staff have been appointed since Mr. Harry Goodman was appointed chief executive of the commission; how many of these staff members are Roman Catholics; and if he will make a statement about Mr. Goodman's previous experience of industry and personnel management prior to his appointment as chief executive of the Commission.

Mr. Needham: Thirty one members of the Fair Employment Commission staff have been appointed since Mr. Harry Goodman was appointed chief executive of the commission, of whom 18 are Protestant and 13 are Roman Catholic.

Mr. Harry Goodman's career began in the Northern Ireland civil service. Prior to leaving the NICS in 1978, he had been a senior manpower adviser on personnel and industrial relations matters, work which necessitated extensive contact with both sides of industry at the highest levels of both management and trade unions.

On leaving the civil service, Mr. Goodman became assistant chief executive and chief officer (advisory services) of the Labour Relations Agency where his work included the development of a range of advisory services to industry on industrial relations and employment and personnel matters, as well as the management of finance and personnel within the organisation. He also had responsibility for the conciliation services associated with individual complaints.

Mr. Goodman is an economics graduate of Queen's university Belfast and a fellow of the Institute of Personnel Management.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the number of persons whose perceived religious affiliation was Protestant and Roman Catholic and *(a)* operational staff and *(b)* other staff of (i) the Fair Employment Agency at the time of its dissolution, (ii) the Fair Employment Commission at the time of its creation and (iii) the Fair Employment Commission at the present time.

Mr. Needham: As the Fair Employment Agency became the Fair Employment Commission on 1 January 1990, the number of staff at the time of the agency's dissolution is the same as the number of commission staff at the time of its creation.

The commission has declared its intention to make monitoring information available on a yearly basis. To make such information available more frequently and covering shorter periods could infringe the confidentiality requirements of the Fair Employment Acts by disclosing the religious beliefs of identifiable individuals. Accordingly, details are provided in relation to support and operational staff as at 1 January 1991.

1 January 1990	*Protestant*	*Roman Catholic*
Operational staff	7	15
Support staff	7	4

1 January 1991	*Protestant*	*Roman Catholic*
Operational staff	18	19
Support staff	12	8

Further Education

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what plans he has to remove further education in Northern Ireland from education and library board control;

(2) if he will make a statement on his conclusions for the future of further education subsequent to the consultative document "Signposts for the 90s"

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General recently announced the conclusions that the Government have reached about the future of further education in Northern Ireland. These took account of the responses received to the consultative document "Signposts for the 90s". In particular, my right hon. and noble Friend announced proposed new arrangements designed to achieve the Government's aim of a better planned and co-ordinated system of further education in the Province. The Government are satisfied that this aim can be achieved without disturbing the existing statutory position of the further education colleges and the education and library boards.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify the number of lecturing posts in each college of further education which have been transferred from youth training programme funding to mainstream further education funding since April 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: Following the introduction of the block funding arrangements for the youth training programme (YTP) on 1 April 1990, the Department of Education was advised that, in a number of further education colleges, some full-time teaching posts which had been funded from YTP resources in previous years were now deployed mainly on mainstream (non-YTP) courses. The number of posts, and the colleges involved are:

Name of College	*Number of posts*
Institute of Further and Higher Education—Belfast	
College of technology	4
College of busines studies	3
Rupert Stanley college	3
Antrim	3
Ballymena	1
Coleraine	2
Magherafelt	3
Newtownabbey	5
Fermanagh	4

Name of College	Number of posts
Limavady	3
North West college	6
Omagh	2
Down	9
Lisburn	2
Newcastle	5
North Down and Ards college	8

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify how much has been allocated by each education and library board to further education out of his recent announcement to allow boards to spend £2·7 million to help to prevent teacher redundancies and to specify the mechanism by which boards allocated this money to colleges.

Dr. Mawhinney: Of the total sum of £2·7 million allocated by the Department, £1·3 million was earmarked for primary schools. Boards then decided how the remaining £1·4 million should be allocated to their post-primary schools and further education colleges.

The amounts allocated by boards to further education colleges were as follows:

Education and library board	£
Belfast	70,000
Western	50,000
North-Eastern	80,000
South-Eastern	Nil
Southern	40,000

Boards allocated these sums to colleges by application of the formula set out in their FE delegation schemes or on the basis of greatest need.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify the amount of the unit of resource being applied by each education and library board to fund a full-time equivalent student in further education.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the relative value of the unit of resource for further education to the level of funding for an A-level student in each grammar school in each board area.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Staffing Levels

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the whole time equivalent number of (i) medical staff, (ii) hospital doctors, (iii) general practitioners, (iv) community doctors and (v) nursing and midwifery staff employed in the Scottish health service in each year since 1974, inclusive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested for each year from 1974 to 1989 is contained in editions of Scottish Health Statistics, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Figures for 1990 are shown in the following table:

Staff in post at 30 September 1990, whole-time equivalents

	Wte	Wtu
Medical staff		9,918·0
Comprising hospital doctors	5,746·3	
Community doctors	428·7	
General medical practitioners	[1]3,743·0	
General dental practitioners		1,694·0
Nursing and midwifery		63,687·2

[1] Provisional, including assistants and trainees.

Council Housing

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses there are; and how many council *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats have been sold in (i) Scotland and (ii) Renfrew district since May 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on local authority housing stock was published in table 14 of Statistical Bulletin HSU No. 17. Copies were sent to all Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the House Library.

Information on the number of council houses and flats sold to sitting tenants between April 1979 and December 1990 is set out in the table.

	Total	Houses	Flats
Scotland	[1]159,020	116,334	42,267
Renfrew	7,064	4,204	2,860

(1) Includes sales where dwelling type is not known.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many mortgage repossessions there have been in *(a)* Strathclyde region and *(b)* Renfrew district during each of the past 12 months for which records are available; and what were the annual figures for each of the past 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available in the form requested. The Council of Mortgage Lenders publishes statistics in their regular newsletters on various aspects of mortgage lending by building societies but this is on a Great Britain basis and no corresponding information is available for Scotland only. No information about other mortgage lenders is held centrally.

Road Safety

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve road safety in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office is committed to playing its full part towards achievement of the Government's target of reducing road accident casualties by one-third by the year 2000. The Scottish Office will work closely with local roads authorities to draw up the road safety plans recommended in the Local Authority Association's "Code of Good Practice" endorsed by COSLA in 1989. It will initiate appropriate engineering works and standards, publicity, education and enforcement measures and legislative changes to improve road safety in Scotland.

In addition to a very substantial ongoing investment on the road network in Scotland, the Scottish Office has set up

an accident investigation and prevention (AIP) unit with its own budget to finance safety schemes on trunk roads. A rolling programme has been prepared by the local authority agents, whose accident remedial unit's viability and establishment has been largely underwritten by the volume of trunk road work, thus allowing expanded expenditure on local roads.

The Scottish road safety campaign, which is largely funded by the Scottish Office, has an ongoing programme providing publicity and education materials in Scotland to raise public awareness of the importance of road safety. This is in addition to the Department of Transport's national campaigns.

Sexual Offences

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reported cases of rape there were in Scotland in 1989 and 1990; how many men were prosecuted for rape in each of these years; how many were convicted; what were the sentences; and how many had previously served a sentence for the same offence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1989 and 1990, 328 and 326 cases respectively of rape were recorded by the police in Scotland. In 1989, 89 men were proceeded against, 50 of whom had a charge of rape proved against them. Of these 50, 39 were imprisoned, seven were sent to a young offenders' institution, two were admonished, one was fined and in one case no order was made.

In 1989, three men successfully prosecuted for rape were recorded as having previously served a sentence for this crime. Court disposal figures for 1990 are not yet available.

Mental Handicap

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will amend the current community charge legislation so as to exempt from any liability those with a mental health handicap who live in accommodation of the Ark housing association and other special housing associations.

Mr. Lang: I have no plans to make any changes to the existing community charge arrangements. However, I have previously made it clear that I would be prepared to do so if particular circumstances showed that changes were necessary.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will exempt those with a mental handicap who live in property of the Ark housing association and other special housing associations from liability to all or part of the proposed council tax.

Mr. Lang: We shall be considering the responses to the consultation paper on our council tax proposals before reaching final decisions on issues of this kind.

Student Accommodation

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students were resident in college accommodation at each university in Scotland in 1990; and what was the proportion of the total number of students in such accommodation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table:

Session 1989-90

University	*Number of students in university-owned residence*	*Percentage of total full-time students*
Aberdeen	2,808	46·0
Dundee	1,494	39·7
Edinburgh	4,270	39·3
Glasgow	2,682	23·3
Heriot-Watt	1,026	23·3
St. Andrews	2,448	62·1
Stirling	2,086	61·1
Strathclyde	1,520	18·2
All Scotland	18,328	35·0

Primary School Testing

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations have been made to him by school boards or parent-teacher associations which have been in favour of compulsory primary school testing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: To date, about 1,300 representatives including those from school boards and parent teacher associations have been received, covering a complete spectrum of views on testing.

Dogs

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of dogs in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) on 5 June 1991 at column 262.

Farm Employment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers, partners, directors and farmworkers were employed by region in Scotland in June 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of farmers, spouses doing farm work and farmworkers employed on main holdings in June 1980, by local authority region, is shown in the following table. Partners and directors are not separately enumerated in the June census but are included either as farmers or farmworkers.

Region	*Number of farmers*	*Number of spouses doing farm work*	*Number of farmworkers*
Borders	1,143	309	3,513
Central	738	265	1,322
Dumfries and Galloway	2,352	806	5,176
Fife	755	225	2,623
Grampian	4,826	1,290	7,549
Highland	2,997	938	2,734
Lothian	805	253	2,802
Strathclyde	4,393	1,989	7,316
Tayside	2,025	532	6,212
Islands	3,027	1,265	1,355
Scotland	23,061	7,872	40,602

Note:

The coverage of main holdings has changed since June 1980. In 1986 some 6,000 holdings were transferred from the main to the minor holdings list. At that time these holdings returned 3,480 farmers, 1,071 spouses and 463 farm workers.

Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which organisations representing parents the Minister of State is willing to meet to discuss educational matters.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am happy of course to receive the views of parents on educational matters at any time, whether or not they are members of an organisation.

House Repairs and Maintenance

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of private sector houses in Glasgow over each of the past five years, and the total amount of grant for repairs and maintenance in each year, and express that total as divided by the number of private sector houses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 May 1991]:* The available information is set out in the table. Grant is not payable for ongoing works of maintenance.

	Private sector dwellings[1] *(a)*	*Amount of repair grant paid*[2] £ *(b)*	*(b) ÷ (a)*
1986	119,172	24,143,865	203
1987	122,176	24,116,945	197
1988	125,401	23,575,413	188
1989	128,093	30,197,296	236
1990	n/a	18,690,760	n/a

[1] *Source:* Valuation roll. Includes housing association dwellings.
[2] *Source:* Returns from Glasgow district council.
n/a not available.

New Towns (Employment)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs were created, and how many jobs were lost, in each of the Scottish new towns in 1990.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* This information is not available for the 1990 calendar year. The development corporations' estimates for the 1990-91 financial year are as follows:

New town	*Number of jobs created*	*Number of jobs lost*	*Net loss or gain*
Cumbernauld	872	189	+683
East Kilbride	864	378	+486
Glenrothes	1,571	2,296	−725
Irvine	1,091	746	+345
Livingston	3,864	3,462	+402
Total	8,262	7,071	+1,191

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *375*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount spent on agricultural support in the United Kingdom under the common agricultural policy and by national grants and subsidies in both actual and real terms for 1960-61 and for each year from 1973-74 to 1990-91.

Mr. Curry: Separate figures for expenditure under the Common Agricultural Policy and on national grants and subsidies are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the positive steps taken by his Ministry to move the emphasis from quantitative to qualitative support in agriculture policy in the EC.

Mr. Curry: The Government have supported a number of changes to the common agricultural policy designed to make Community agriculture more market orientated. Such changes should encourage farmers to respond to consumer demand and to rely less on artificial outlets such as intervention.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will meet constituents of the hon. Member for Devon, North who suffer from the effects of using organophosphorous sheep dip compounds.

Mr. Maclean: I met representatives from the Pesticides Exposure Group of Sufferers (PEGS) on 23 October 1990. I can see little advantage in having a further meeting at this time.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many complaints he has received about the physical side effects of organophosphorous sheep dip compounds; if he will refuse future licences for these compounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have received 63 reports since 1985 of suspected adverse reactions concerning the physical side effects to humans of organophosphorous sheep dips. Twelve of these reports relate to products no longer licensed. In addition I have recently received 18 brief reports from the National Poisons Centre which my officials are currently investigating. I am not yet able to say whether these reports include duplicates of those mentioned above.

These 63 reports should be set in the context of more than 1 million dippings since 1985.

All suspected adverse reaction reports are investigated. Future licence applications for such compounds will continue to be determined in accordance with the Medicines Act criteria of safety, quality and efficacy. Existing organophosphorous sheep dip products are currently being reviewed to see whether they meet up-to-date standards. Any products which fail to do so will have to be withdrawn from the market. The review will be completed later this year.

Pigs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of representations he has received concerning his proposed regulations on sow stalls and tethers; and when he expects these regulations to become effective.

Mr. Maclean: Those consulted on the draft Welfare of Pigs Regulations 1991 were not warned that their responses might be made public and I do not therefore propose to make them available.

If Parliament approves the proposed regulations this month, they will make it illegal to use new close

confinement systems for pigs from 1 October this year and will phase out existing installations of this kind by the end of 1998.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the evidence of blue ear disease among pigs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Symptoms not immediately attributable to any specific disease have occurred on eleven premises in Humberside. Blue-eared pig disease, which has occurred in a number of other Community countries, cannot be ruled out as the cause. Movement restrictions have been imposed on the areas surrounding the holdings concerned and investigations are continuing.

Meat Inspection Charges

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the practices of meat inspection charges being passed directly to producers.

Mr. Maclean: We are aware of the concerns expressed by livestock producers about the passing back of an element of the meat inspection charges. The purpose of meat inspection and residue sampling at slaughterhouses is, of course, to protect the final consumer. We are also aware that the Director General of Fair Trading is considering this issue and this Department stands ready to provide any inspection he may require.

Dogs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 3 June, *Official Report*, what information he holds concerning the details of dogs imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Prospective importers of dogs into this country are required to supply details of their animal such as breed, age and sex in order that the Department can issue an import licence. This information is used to check that a dog arriving in the United Kingdom is covered by an import licence. Subsequently the information is not required and it could only be retrieved at disproportionate cost. The numbers of import licences issued for dogs during the last five years are:

	Number
1986	4,738
1987	5,249
1988	5,132
1989	5,915
1990	5,999

Sugar

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the 1991-92 farm prices as they affect sugar production and prices.

Mr. Curry: In the 1991-92 price settlement, EC support prices for sugar beet and white sugar were frozen at 1990-91 levels in ECU terms. A green pound devaluation will result in a 2·04 per cent. increase in these prices in the United Kingdom.

Green Pound Devaluation

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on consumers arising from the recent green pound devaluation.

Mr. Curry: It is estimated that when the effects have fully worked through the devaluations will increase the food price index by approximately 0·25 per cent. and the retail price index by less than 0·05 per cent.

Farm Employment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers, partners, directors and farmworkers were employed by county in England in June 1980.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is given in the table. Data are taken from the June 1980 agricultural census and hence exclude estimates for minor holdings not in the annual census.

Distribution of farmers and workers by county
June 1980 census (England)

	Principal farmers or partners	*Other partners or directors*	*Spouses of farmers/ partners or directors*	*All other workers*	*Total*
Avon	1,890	604	584	4,129	7,207
Bedfordshire	1,118	620	467	3,177	5,382
Berkshire	735	268	220	2,353	3,576
Buckinghamshire	1,653	620	528	3,477	6,278
Cambridgeshire	3,497	1,576	1,182	10,859	17,114
Cheshire	3,848	1,289	1,336	5,915	12,388
Cleveland	430	168	122	703	1,423
Cornwall	6,243	1,807	2,263	6,461	16,774
Cumbria	5,698	2,269	2,103	5,313	15,383
Derbyshire	3,420	1,194	1,105	3,796	9,515
Devon	9,834	2,722	3,708	10,390	26,654
Dorset	2,501	891	938	5,243	9,573
Durham	2,002	783	722	2,386	5,893
East Sussex	1,864	616	635	3,973	7,088
Essex	3,154	1,487	1,084	10,131	15,856
Gloucestershire	2,652	1,018	877	5,233	9,780
Greater London (East)	130	57	42	493	722

	Principal farmers or partners	Other partners or directors	Spouses of farmers/ partners or directors	All other workers	Total
Greater London (South-East)	281	95	92	995	1,463
Greater Manchester	1,393	514	510	1,862	4,279
Hampshire	2,478	959	818	8,412	12,667
Hereford and Worcester	5,787	2,204	1,915	11,672	21,578
Hertfordshire	1,112	489	322	3,544	5,467
Humberside	3,189	1,682	894	8,890	14,655
Isle of Wight	423	116	135	1,054	1,728
Isles of Scilly	61	18	30	109	218
Kent	3,690	1,464	1,231	16,448	22,833
Lancashire	5,399	1,951	2,095	7,011	16,456
Leicestershire	2,507	1,011	728	4,026	8,272
Lincolnshire	5,451	2,626	1,882	17,901	27,860
Merseyside	470	219	178	1,109	1,976
Norfolk	4,620	1,786	1,451	17,761	25,618
North Yorkshire (B[illegible]erley)	3,114	1,256	1,114	5,546	11,030
North Yorkshire (N[illegible]th Allerton)	4,636	2,080	1,438	6,907	15,061
Northamptonshire	1,674	731	496	3,238	6,139
Northumberland	2,024	907	709	3,822	7,462
Nottinghamshire	1,804	799	464	4,408	7,475
Oxfordshire	1,801	751	536	4,701	7,789
Shropshire	4,350	1,635	1,478	6,788	14,251
Somerset	4,812	1,639	1,767	7,307	15,525
South Yorkshire	1,251	518	373	1,954	4,096
Staffordshire	3,939	1,336	1,316	5,304	11,895
Suffolk	3,190	1,428	1,040	10,476	16,134
Surrey	1,354	440	475	4,845	7,114
Tyne and Wear	284	116	77	580	1,057
Warwickshire	2,041	770	653	3,838	7,402
West Midlands	461	162	156	854	1,633
West Sussex	1,628	709	681	8,102	11,120
West Yorkshire	2,519	882	751	3,116	7,268
Wiltshire	2,549	981	717	6,019	10,266

Source: Agricultural census June 1980 (excludes minor holdings).

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the future of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Curry: The Government's approach has been to encourage the dairy industry to come forward with proposals for more open and competitive milk marketing arrangements. We welcomed the milk marketing board's decision to submit plans for transforming itself to co-operative status. The next step is for the board to bring the dairy trade into its discussions and there will need to be an opportunity for wider consultation with all interests affected before decisions are taken. The Government are ready to facilitate change provided it commands industry support and is compatible with competition law.

DEFENCE

JP233 Weapons

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has completed his evaluation of the effectiveness of the JP233s delivered by the RAF in the Gulf war; if this weapon is still being produced; and if any have been sold to other nations.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are continuing to study all aspects of the Gulf campaign. Production of the JP233 has now ceased. It is not our normal practice to comment on whether particular items of defence equipment have been sold abroad.

Gulf War

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete the lessons of the Gulf weapons and tactics used by Her Majesty's Forces in the recent war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed analysis of the campaign and the conclusions to be drawn from it is continuing, and will not be complete for some time.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now able to state how many of the seven Tornado aircraft lost in the Gulf war were shot down by enemy action; and how many crashed after flying into the ground without being hit by hostile fire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the six Tornados lost in action during the Gulf conflict, it now seems likely that two aircraft were lost to anti-aircraft fire and a third to a surface-to-air missile at medium level, but detailed investigations are continuing.

Boxer System

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Royal Air Force needs a new advance communications network; how many towers are to be built as part of the Boxer system, and where; how much these new arrangements will cost; what discussions he had with British Telecom and Mercury with a view to their providing such a network for leasing by the Royal Air Force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Royal Air Force's existing communications system within the United Kingdom,

which relies almost entirely on commercially-rented facilities, lacks sufficient capacity for high-speed digital data transfer. The Boxer network which will replace it, will include a total of 212 microwave link towers, using existing towers wherever possible. For security reasons locations cannot be disclosed. The estimated cost of the project is £230 million. The option of continuing to rely on commercially-rented facilities has been considered but rejected on cost grounds.

Married Quarters, Hampshire

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the sufficiency of availability of married quarters for the various units due to be withdrawn from BAOR under the new NATO arrangements; and what assessment he has made of the effect upon housing requirements in Hampshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future requirement for married quarters in the United Kingdom is currently being reviewed as part of the "Options for Change" studies.

Low Flying

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the avoidance areas for low-flying military aircraft over Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As set out in the Government's reply to the Defence Committee's report on low flying last year (HC 659/90), it remains our policy not to release such information.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the corridor for low-flying aircraft running north from the Severn estuary to the Black mountains was narrowed in the past 10 years; and what were the reasons for the change.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am not aware of any such corridor. The structure of the current United Kingdom low flying system is designed to make the widest possible area available for low flying training so as to minimise the level of disturbance to those on the ground.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if fhe will define the boundaries of the transit areas for low-flying aircraft over Wales now and those which existed prior to 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Rapid Reaction Force

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what United Kingdom nuclear weapons will be allocated in support of the new allied command in Europe rapid reaction force; and what additional costs will result to the armed forces budget as a result of the NATO Ministers' meeting on 28 May.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We do not comment on nuclear weapon deployments. The costs of the force structure emerging from the "Options for Change" study and from consultations with NATO are being further refined and the Government's spending plans for defence will be set out in the Autumn Statement following this year's public expenditure discussions.

Challenger Tank

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ask General Dynamics to detail those aspects of its tender for the Challenger tank replacement which cover senior executives' emoluments.

Mr Alan Clark: No.

Helicopter Flights, Northern Ireland

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average daily number of helicopter flights to and from Army installations at *(a)* Crossmaglen, *(b)* Bessbrook, *(c)* Forkhill, *(d)* Drummuckavall, *(e)* Crievekeeran and *(f)* Glassdrummond in each month since 1 January 1988.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to provide operational details of this kind.

General Dynamics

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those contracts valued at over £10 million for which General Dynamics is currently tendering as prime contractor.

Mr. Alan Clark: Involving my Department, one only —the contract for a main battle tank to replace the Chieftain.

Contract Tendering

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to ask companies tendering for contracts for information in relation to senior executives' emoluments.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our existing arrangements with industry are adequate in this regard.

Vacant Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out in the *Official Report* the location of each site and its acreage of the unused and underused land held by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD register of unused and underused land in England is presently being updated. A list of sites included in the register as at 31 March 1990 is set out below. Many of these sites have now been sold or are in the process of disposal. I will provide the hon. Member with a revised list when available. Similar information for land held in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is not held centrally and could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

County	*Local authority*	*Location*	*Description*	*Hectares*
Avon	Bristol City Council	Bristol	Vale lane—Quarry	1·619
Bedfordshire	North Bedfordshire BC	Cardington	RAF Cardington	11·938
Berkshire	Windsor and Maidenhead DC	Slough	ARE Ditton Park	30·351

County	Local authority	Location	Description	Hectares
Cambridgeshire	Huntingdon	Huntingdon	RAF Brampton	0·727
Cambridgeshire	Peterborough City Council	Peterborough	Saville Road	0·499
Cambridgeshire	South Cambridgeshire DC	Duxford	Land adjoining M.Q's	2·509
Cheshire	Macclesfield BC	Wilmslow	Dean Row	21·600
Cheshire	Warrington BC	Stockton Heath	103-115 Greenfields Avenue	0·360
Cornwall	Caradon DC	Saltash	Land and Buildings	1·044
Cornwall	Carrick DC	Swanvale	Oil Fuel depot	3·400
Cumbria	Carlisle City	Crindledyke	Development land	0·473
Cumbria	Carlisle City	Longtown	CAD—Site B	0·500
Cumbria	Copeland BC	Millom	Hycemoor Way	2·790
Cumbria	Copeland BC	Whitehaven	Eskmeals house	2·800
Cumbria	Copeland BC	Whitehaven	Hycemoor Way	2·860
Derbyshire	South Derbyshire DC	Hilton	CVD	109·265
Devon	Plymouth City Council	Mount Wise	Land and Buildings	2·010
Devon	Plymouth City Council	Radford Woods	Oil Fuel Depot	11·730
Devon	Plymouth City Council	Turnchapel	Oil Fuel Depot	5·110
Devon	South Hams DC	Dartmouth	Land—College Way	1·340
Devon	South Hams DC	Plymouth	Renney Lentney Training Camp	23·876
Devon	Torbay BC	Brixham	Oil Fuel Depot	3·680
Devon	West Devon BC	Harrowbeer	Stores Depot	3·800
Dorset	East Dorset DC	Wimborne	West Moore—Petrol	1·619
Dorset	Weymouth and Portland BC	Portland	Folly Pier, The Grove	13·000
Dorset	Weymouth and Portland BC	Portland	The Grove Reservoir	4·000
Durham	Derwentside DC	Consett	Watling Street	0·720
Essex	Braintree DC	Braintree	Land at RAF Ridgewell	2·302
Essex	Colchester BC	Colchester	Bounstead Road	0·510
Greater London	Barnet	Hendon	East Camp	15·192
Greater London	Barnet	Hendon	HQ's	0·405
Greater London	Barnet	Hendon	RAF Hendon	0·405
Greater London	Barnet	Whetstone	Postal Buildings	0·809
Greater London	Greenwich	Woolwich	Arsenal East	32·375
Greater London	Greenwich	Woolwich	Cambridge House	0·529
Greater London	Greenwich	Woolwich	Connaught Barracks	2·428
Greater London	Greenwich	Woolwich	Roberts House	0·480
Greater London	Hillingdon	Harefield	Harefield House	4·047
Greater London	Hounslow	Hounslow	Beavers Lane Camp	3·209
Greater London	Richmond-Upon-Thames	Teddington	ARE Queen's Road	0·821
Hampshire	Basingstoke & Deane BC	Bramley	Campbell Road	14·810
Hampshire	Basingstoke & Deane BC	Bramley	Land at Coopers Lane	0·210
Hampshire	East Hampshire DC	Bramshott	Land—Hammer Lane	2·280
Hampshire	East Hampshire DC	East Meon	HMS Mercury	12·830
Hampshire	Eastleigh BC	West end	RN Victualing Depot	4·800
Hampshire	Fareham BC	HMS Daedalus	Land	8·020
Hampshire	Fareham BC	Hillhead	RNE Seafield Park	5·800
Hampshire	Fareham BC	Lee-on-Solent	Land at HMS Daedalus	0·599
Hampshire	Fareham BC	Titchfield	Land adjacent HQ's	0·510
Hampshire	Gosport BC	Gosport	Land—Fort Road	2·274
Hampshire	Gosport BC	Gosport	Land—Haslar Road	2·926
Hampshire	Gosport BC	Gosport	Priddy's Hard	40·469
Hampshire	Gosport BC	Rowner	Caravan Site	2·630
Hampshire	Gosport BC	Rowner	Red House Site	3·743
Hampshire	Gosport BC	Rowner III South	Flats & Houses	4·452
Hampshire	New Forest DC	Calshot	Land & Houses	2·210
Hampshire	Portsmouth City Council	Gunwharf	HMS Nelson	3·775
Hampshire	Portsmouth City Council	Southsea	RM Eastney	14·600
Hampshire	Rushmoor BC	Aldershot	Willems Park	8·069
Hampshire	Rushmoor BC	Farnborough	RAF Sports Ground	4·856
Hampshire	Rushmoor BC	Farnborough	RAF Borough	1·635
Hampshire	Winchester City Council	Winchester	Bar End Playing Fields	4·110
Hampshire	Winchester City Council	Winchester	Peninsula Barracks	6·070
Hereford and Worcester	Malvern Hills DC	Malvern	The Lills, Blackmore Park	2.990
Hereford and Worcester	Malvern Hills DC	Malvern Wells	Wood Farm Camp	9·000
Hereford and Worcester	Wyre Forest DC	Kidderminster	Land—Drakelow Lane	4·500
Hertfordshire	Hertsmere BC	Bushey	Ford Close	0·899
Hertfordshire	Three Rivers DC	Leavesden	Private Airfield	96·315
Hertfordshire	Watford BC	Leavesden	Private Airfield	10·522
Humberside	Beverley DC	Leconfield	Lissett and Carnaby Close	2·480
Humberside	East Yorkshire DC	Driffield	Alamein Barracks	5·140
Humberside	East Yorkshire DC	Great Driffield	Auchinleck Close	6·268
Kent	Dover DC	Deal	Cold Blow Sports Ground	8·181
Kent	Dover DC	Dover	Land—Broadlees Bottom	8·370
Lancashire	Preston BC	Preston	Greaveston—Oil Depot	3·600
Lancashire	Preston BC	Preston Docks	Former Oil Depot	3·400

County	*Local authority*	*Location*	*Description*	*Hectares*
Lancashire	West Lancashire DC	Burscough	Land—OSU Burscough	2·104
Leicestershire	Charnwood BC	Burton-on-the-Wolds	Souters Lane	1.914
Leicestershire	Rutland DC	North Luffenham	Private Airfield	0·437
Lincolnshire	East Lindsey DC	North Coates	Private Airfield	11·331
Lincolnshire	West Lindsey DC	Binbrook	RAF HQ's	23·876
Lincolnshire	West Lindsey DC	Binbrook	RAF Technical areas	31·970
Lincolnshire	West Lindsey DC	Hemswell	Gibraltar and Passey Roads	1·054
Norfolk	Breckland DC	Watton	RAF Watton	2·921
Northumberland	Castle Morpeth BC	Saltwick	Tranwell Airfield	2·428
Nottinghamshire	Broxstowe DC	Beston	Chilwell	38·020
Nottinghamshire	Rushcliffe BC	Ruddington	Ruddington	110.480
North Yorkshire	Harrogate BC	Dishforth	Pt. OS 2046	4·570
North Yorkshire	Harrogate BC	Dishforth	Pt. OS 3246	3·743
North Yorkshire	Harrogate BC	York	Acomb Portal Road	0·613
North Yorkshire	Richmondshire DC	Catterick	Land—Catterick Road	4·589
North Yorkshire	Richmondshire DC	Catterick	Richmond Road	1·280
North Yorkshire	York City	York	Acomb Askham Lane	2·400
Oxfordshire	Cherwell DC	Bicester	B Site	38·040
Oxfordshire	Cherwell DC	Bicester	Langford Park Farm	4·010
Oxfordshire	Cherwell DC	Bicester	Mellor Gate	1·530
Shropshire	Shrewsbury and Atcham BC	Shrewsbury	Shelton Road	5·463
Somerset	Taunton Deane BC	Taunton	Jellalabad Bks	2·023
Somerset	West Somerset DC	Watchet	Land	15·400
Staffordshire	East Staffordshire DC	Fauld	former RAF Site	5·600
Staffordshire	Stafford BC	Stafford	Elsworthy Close	1·412
Staffordshire	Stafford BC	Stafford	Naafi Site	2·371
Suffolk	Ipswich BC	Ipswich	Yarmouth Road	1·000
Surrey	Guildford BC	Guildford	Stoughton Barracks	7·284
Surrey	Guildford BC	Peasmarsh	Artington Cold store	4·048
Warwickshire	Warwick DC	Hampton on the Hill	1 to 10 Montgomery Ave	1·500
Wiltshire	Kennet DC	Everleigh	Everleigh Manor	12·760
Wiltshire	Kennet DC	North Tidworth	Land—Ludgershall Road	·215
Wiltshire	Kennet DC	North Ludgershall	Crawlboys Road	23·195
Wiltshire	Kennet DC	Tidworth	Mathew Circular Estate	6·475
Wiltshire	Kennet DC	West Chisenbury	Thatched Barn	·255
Wiltshire	Salisbury DC	Amesbury	Boscombe Down HQ's	5.991
			Total Hectares	1022·777
			Total Acres	2527·333

Batus Range Accident

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether metal detectors were used as part of the range clearance or safety measures before Grenadier guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey were ordered to dig a trench in an impact area of the Batus live firing range in Canada on 7 July 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Metal detectors are not used as part of the range clearance measures at the Batus training area. The range covers some 2,630 sq km (1,000 sq mi) and it would be impractical to use detectors to sweep the area.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the findings and of the summary findings of the board of inquiry into the Batus range accident of 7 July 1989 involving Grenadier guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will arrange for a summary of the findings of the board of inquiry into this incident to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for his conclusion that no blame attached to anyone for the detonation of an unexploded shell that caused grievous injuries to Grenadier guardsmen Adrian Hicks, John Ray and Sean Povey.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Legal advice was that it was not reasonably foreseeable that there should be a buried live munition at the spot where the trench was being dug and there was no blame attributable.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 13 June 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Court Appeals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General what arrangements are available to review convictions which have been upheld on appeal from the magistrates court to the Crown Court, but in relation to which new evidence has come to light after the Crown Court appeal; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is no statutory power to enable such convictions to be reviewed or appealed against although the Divisional Court has held that it has, in its supervisory jurisdiction, power to quash the conviction of a defendant who pleaded quilty on the basis of flawed evidence unwittingly relied on by the prosecution or whose conviction was obtained by fraud, collusion, perjury or other like matter. I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the judgment in R. *v.* Bolton Justices Ex Parte Scally which is reported at [1991] 2All ER 619 and at [1991] 1 QB 537.

Legislation Texts

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will review the arrangements for enabling the public to have access to the texts of legislation; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor recognises that he has a responsibility, on behalf of the Government, to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for the publication of the statute book, in order that the citizen may know by what laws he is bound. Since 1868, the Statute Law Committee, established by Lord Chancellor Cairns, has met periodically to consider issues relating to the publication of the statute book. In recent times it has been assisted by an editorial board to supervise the publication of statutes in force and by a secretariat. The Lord Chancellor has come to the conclusion that these somewhat complex arrangements are not best suited, under modern conditions, for the effective discharge of this responsibility. He has, therefore, decided to replace the committee, and its subordinate bodies, with a single body to be known as the Advisory Committee on Statute Law. This body will advise him as and when required on all matters relating to the publication of the statute book, including the availability of up-to-date texts in both printed and electronic form. It will meet under his chairmanship or that of his Permanent Secretary, and its membership will comprise the Clerk of the Parliaments, the Clerk of the House of Commons, the Chairman of the Law Commission, the chairman of the Scottish Law Commission, First Parliamentary Counsel, the legal secretary to the Lord Advocate and First Scottish Parliamentary Counsel, First Legislative Counsel for Northern Ireland, the Treasury Solicitor, the Solicitor to the Scottish Office, and representatives from Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department. In addition, it will be able to involve user and consumer groups as necessary, either by way of consultation or by invitation to attend meetings of the Committee.

CIVIL SERVICE

Public Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which his office was responsible for each of the past five years together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Renton: In the past five years, my office has been responsible for a number of appointments to the Civil Service Appeal Board. The appointments are fee-paid. Chairmen are normally appointed for three years and deputy chairmen and members for two years. Further details may be found in "Public Bodies" which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the expenditure covered by his office's hospitality fund for the financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Tim Renton: Expenditure by my office, excluding No. 10 Downing street and my executive agencies, on hospitality, is as follows:

	£
1989-90	6,702
1990-91	4,393
[1]1991-92	1,422

[1] To date.

THE ARTS

Public Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which his office was responsible for each of the past five years together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the annual publication "Public Bodies" and to the Women's National Commission's "Handbook for Women's Organisations" published in July, 1990. My office is the sponsor department for a large number of public bodies. The verification and provision of the termination date of each board or council member's appointment would, I regret, involve disproportionate costs.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the expenditure covered by his office's hospitality fund for the financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Tim Renton: The Office of Arts and Libraries has spent £5,741 on official hospitality in 1989-90, £2,890 in 1990-91, and £1,262 in 1991-92 to date.

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his office during the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Renton: "The Cook Report: Raiders of the Lost Art"—ITV, 29 April 1991. No purchases were made in 1990-91.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give for each available year from 1978, the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1990-91 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes; and if he will give the square footage of accommodation to which these figures relate.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* The information requested by the hon. Member is available only in *(a)* cash and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms from 1987-88, and *(c)* in units of consumption from 1989-90. This is given in the table:

	Electricity			*Gas*			*Liquid fuel*		
	Cash £	*1990-91 prices* £	*'000 kilowatt hours*	*Cash* £	*1990-91 prices* £	*'000 therms*	*Cash* £	*1990-91 prices* £	*'000 litres*
1987-88	5,069	6,241	n/a	1,349	1,661	n/a	659	812	n/a
1988-89	6,717	7,699	n/a	970	1,112	n/a	845	969	n/a
1989-90	5,877	6,332	102	872	940	2	778	838	6
1990-91	6,048	6,048	106	280	280	1	860	860	5

n/a = Not available.

No solid fuel is used. The figures relate to 14,262 sq ft of floor space.

Bradford Cinema

Mr. Madden: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about provision for cinema in Bradford involving the British Film Institute.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* Discussions are continuing between the British Film Institute and interested parties in Bradford on the future configuration of cinema in Bradford as a partnership between the Museum Library Cinema and the Bradford Playhouse.

ENVIRONMENT

Royal Parks

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his written answer concerning the status of the royal parks, of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *3*, he will list the changes that are liable to occur to *(a)* employment of permanent staff in the royal parks, their career structure and skill training, *(b)* recruitment, and morale and *(c)* supervisors of work of ground maintenance by contract or other means, including outside tendering or agency arrangements.

Mr. Yeo: The changes for staff in the royal parks will depend on future arrangements for carrying out ground maintenance work. These are still under consideration.

Local Government Structure

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the proposed change to the structure of local government.

Mr. Key: So far we have received 432 responses to our consultation paper on local government structure.

Countryside Preservation

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered the effect of hedgerow and stonedyke systems upon the conservation of wildlife and management of the countryside; if he will consider the introduction of statutory controls over the removal of such systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has commissioned a research project on hedgerow management—including environmental and wildlife aspects. We shall receive the final report shortly.

In our White Paper "This Common Inheritance" we announced our intention to give local planning authorities powers to protect important hedgerows in their areas. A consultation paper issued in December gave further details. Responses to that paper have raised a number of key issues, and we are giving these careful consideration. It would therefore be premature to legislate, and we have tabled an amendment to the Planning and Compensation Bill to delete provision for such orders from that Bill. I shall be making a full statement on this matter at the resumption of Report stage. Our aim is to ensure that any scheme commands the widest possible agreement and will be fair and practicable.

Homelessness

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what annual percentage of households accepted as homeless by local authorities in London have been accepted under the category of vulnerability due to age each year for the last 10 years; what number of households this represents for each year; and what number of people this represents for each year.

Sir George Young: The available information relates to the number of households accepted by local authorities under the homelessness legislation as having a priority need for accommodation because of vulnerability due to

old age. The number of persons in such households is not reported. The estimates based on returns from London boroughs are as follows:

Year	Number of households	as percentage of all priority acceptances
1981	1,300	7
1982	1,700	8
1983	1,900	8
1984	1,900	8
1985	2,300	9
1986	2,200	8
1987	2,100	7
1988	2,100	7
1989	1,900	6
1990	1,800	5

Note: Including estimates for missing returns.

East Quayside Development, Tyne and Wear

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation first entered into any legal or binding agreement in respect of the East Quayside development; with whom these agreements were made and on what terms; what is their current status and when this altered; and what is the current position of the corporation with respect to receiving tenders for this development;

(2) on what date Tyne and Wear urban development corporation carried out a full financial investigation into the financial standing of NQD plc in relation to the selection of a preferred developer of East Quayside; what guaranteees were sought from NQD as to its ability to continue the development after the collapse of Stanley Miller; and what steps were taken to monitor the accounts of NQD over the past three years;

(3) when was the last time that a financial check was made on the preferred developer for the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation East Quayside project;

(4) when the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation was first aware that NQD plc was trading while insolvent;

(5) how much money was paid by Tyne and Wear urban development corporation to the successful developer as a contribution for work preceding the competition for the redevelopment at East Quayside; to whom this money was paid; and in what form it was paid;

(6) if he will make a statement on the stages of selection to find the preferred developer for the East Quayside scheme, East Newcastle;

(7) what criteria the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation applied to selecting preferred developers; and how these were applied in assessing the financial status of NQD plc in regard to East Quayside development;

(8) what is the compulsory purchase order price agreed with the district valuer for the seven acre site on East Quayside, Newcastle, formerly owned by Stanley Miller;

(9) what is the current value of the land formerly owned by Stanley Miller on the East Quayside; on what date Stanley Miller transferred ownership of the land to NQD; and how many days then followed before Stanley Miller was in receivership;

(10) if he will name *(a)* the architects and *(b)* the engineers who designed the original Godfrey Bradman scheme which was accepted by Tyne and Wear urban development corporation, for the redevelopment of Newcastle Quayside; and whether either are still associated with the project;

(11) what action the chief executive of Tyne and Wear urban development corporation took to seek a partner for Shearwater after Stanley Miller went into receivership;

(12) how many consultants reported findings to the board of Tyne and Wear urban development corporation on the competition for the East Quayside development on *(a)* financial assessment, *(b)* hotel advice, *(c)* quantity surveyors, *(d)* valuers, *(e)* retail leisure specialists, *(f)* design/planning consultants and *(g)* economic assessment; and where these reports are available for inspection.

Mr. Key: It would not be appropriate to comment at the present time on matters relating to the proposed redevelopment of Newcastle's East Quayside. A related compulsory purchase order and stopping up of highways order may yet be subject to further legal challenge in the Court of Appeal. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member as soon as all the legal issues are resolved.

Rents-to-Mortgages Scheme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the percentage target figure his Department has set in respect of the rents-to-mortgages pilot scheme for council house tenants in Basildon.

Mr. Yeo: The scheme is for tenants of the Commission for the New Towns, not local authority tenants: that would require primary legislation. There is no set target for sales, the purpose being to test the working of rents to mortgages.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the range of remuneration received by the former board members of the water authorities immediately prior to privatisation.

Mr. Trippier: The ranges were set out for each authority in "Public Bodies 1989"—ISBN 0 11 430042 9—a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the salaries received by former chairmen of the water authorities immediately prior to privatisation.

Mr. Trippier: The salaries were listed in "Public Bodies 1989"—ISBN 0 11 430042 9—a copy of which is in the Library.

EC Nuclear Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department was invited to participate in or send an observer to the conference on European Community nuclear issues and local authorities, held in Birmingham on 5 June; and if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of papers presented.

Mr. Baldry: I have no knowledge of this conference.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the proposal to be put forward by Iceland, Norway and

Denmark to the Paris Commission on Marine Pollution in its meeting in the Hague on 17 June, recommending that the disposal of radioactive waste under the seabed be brought within the remit of the commission.

Mr. Baldry: The Government take the view that the disposal of radioactive waste under the seabed accessed from the land is outside the scope of the present Paris convention. However, this issue will need to be addressed at the appropriate time, within the context of the review of the Oslo and Paris conventions which is currently under way.

Glenlochay Compensation Award

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy conclusions he has drawn from the Glenlochay compensation award.

Mr. Trippier: We shall wish to study the details of the award carefully before reaching any conclusions.

Planning and Development

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the report of the research carried out on behalf of his Department into the effects of the Use Classes Order 1987 and associated provisions in the General Development Order 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Independent research into the effects of these orders was carried out last year on behalf of the Department by Wootton Jeffreys Consultants, in association with Bernard Thorpe. I have considered the consultants' report, which is being published today by HMSO.

The researchers found that the introduction in 1987 of "business" use class had improved the efficiency with which space is used and had widened choice. They found evidence that some existing industrial uses have been replaced by cleaner uses, and that the opportunity for change has attracted greater investment, resulting in improvements to the local environment. Although the researchers found some evidence of increased traffic generated by more intensive use of former industrial land, no other adverse effects on amenity or the environment were associated with the business use class. I am therefore satisfied that there is no case on environmental grounds for amending the business use class.

The research confirmed continuing misgivings about the business use class in other respects, including the displacement of manufacturing jobs, which have traditionally met local employment needs, and of pressures on specialised activities which have built up in particular locations. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that development activity since the 1987 Use Classes Order has been generally consistent with existing, often long-established market trends. I have concluded that to amend legislation which applies uniformly throughout England and Wales in response to these concerns would not be justified.

Where clear justification can be provided, it remains open to planning authorities to propose policies in development plans aimed at channelling particular types of business development into particular locations. Development plans should not generally contain policies advocating the imposition of general restrictions on the freedoms provided by the Use Classes Order or the General Development Order.

The research revealed evidence of some local controversy resulting from changes of use involving fast-food and take-away outlets within the food and drink use class. I am also aware of some misgivings over changes of use to and from public houses within that use class. I am not persuaded that a case has been made for adjusting the present scope for changes of use in the high street sector, where the researchers found that market activity has been generally subdued since 1987.

I am encouraged that the researchers found that the inclusion of small group homes within the dwelling houses use class has benefited the care in the community programme, without adverse effects on amenity. My attention has been drawn to concern about the impact on residential areas of changes of use within the hotels and hostels use class. This concern appears to be associated as much with the characteristics of the clientele, where "down market" changes of use have taken place, as with any land-use planning difference between the uses encompassed within the use class. There is some very localised evidence of harm to amenity, through increased traffic and general activity, associated with the conversion of hostels into hotels, but this is insufficient to merit amending the order.

I have concluded that the freedom from planning control currently provided by the Use Classes Order and part 3 of schedule 2 to the General Development Order should remain unchanged. However, the Government proposes to continue to monitor closely the effects of the Use Classes Order and General Development Order and we are minded to commission further research in another three to five years.

Discharge Consents

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will approve the scheme of charges in respect of discharge consents proposed by the National Rivers Authority in March under the Water Act 1989.

Mr. Baldry: Following public consultation my right hon. Friend has today approved the NRA's proposed charging scheme for implementation from 1 July, subject to a number of modifications mainly aimed at making the scheme's provisions clearer. A copy of the modified scheme has been deposited in the Library. We shall keep the operation of the scheme under careful review throughout its three-year period of validity.

The scheme represents an important element of the Government's wider commitment to implement the "polluter pays" principle. It will ensure that the NRA's costs incurred in authorising and monitoring direct discharges of effluent to water are borne by dischargers themselves. By recouping the costs in this way it will save the general taxpayer some £41 million in a full year via a reduced need for grant in aid to the NRA.

New Parliamentary Buildings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to save the mahogany railed staircase and related iron-work after the proposed demolition of No. 1 Bridge street.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 June 1991]:* As the hon. Member will no doubt be aware, the Opposed Bill Committee which considered the Jubilee Line Bills has recommended that approval to demolish Nos. 1 and 2

Bridge street, which is necessary to enable the new Westminster station to be constructed, should not be given until the House has approved the design of the new parliamentary building, to be built on the site.

Design work has not yet started so it is too soon to say whether the staircase can be used in the new building or should be removed for use elsewhere.

Councils (Internal Management)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the third paper of his review of local government relating to internal management of local councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 May 1991 at column *402*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Incomes

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage police pay, pensions and allowances have been raised higher or lower than the rate of inflation for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested in respect of pay is set out in the table and shows the minimum and maximum of the salary scales of a police constable. Equivalent figures for the various allowances to which police officers are also entitled can be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. Police pensions are uprated annually in line with movements in the retail prices index and have thus kept pace with inflation over this period.

	Minimum	*Maximum*
1979		
Salaries	4·086	6·471
Percentage change	(13·0)	(18·6)
1980		
Salaries	4·956	7·848
Percentage change	(2·8)	(2·8)
1981		
Salaries	5·610	8·883
Percentage change	(1·2)	(1·2)
1982		
Salaries	6·189	9·798
Percentage change	(1·6)	(1·6)
1983		
Salaries	6·708	10·620
Percentage change	(3·6)	(3·6)
1984		
Salaries	6·708	11·193
Percentage change	(−4·7)	(0·4)
1985		
Salaries	7·212	12·033
Percentage change	(1·3)	(1·0)
1986		
Salaries	7·752	12·936
Percentage change	(1·1)	(5·7)
1987		
Salaries	8·352	13·938
Percentage change	(3·4)	(3·4)
1988		
Salaries	8·352	15·125
Percentage change	(−4·7)	(3·4)
1989		
Salaries	9·900	16·521
Percentage change	(10·0)	(1·4)
1990		
Salaries	10·886	18·132
Percentage change	(1·0)	(1·0)

Notes:
Salaries are based on 1 September for each year.
Figures in brackets show yearly percentage change in real terms.

Power Station, Isle of Man

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has made to the Manx Government concerning the proposed power station to be sited in the River Neb valley, Isle of Man.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such representations have been made. The Isle of Man is not part of the United Kingdom and has primary responsibility for its own domestic affairs.

Fire Service

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many full-time fire fighters were employed in England and Wales as at 1 January 1990 and 1 January 1991, indicating both the authorised and actual establishment figures.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table.

Total of full-time fire fighters (establishment and strength)

	1990	*1991*
England		
Establishment	33,863	34,082
Strength	33,309	33,850
Wales		
Establishment	1,753	1,730
Strength	1,693	1,709

Charities

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the total income of charities which is derived from direct mail and related fund-raising.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the income of charities from these sources is not collected centrally.

Sudbury Prison

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently held at Sudbury prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: On Monday 10 June 1991 there were 497 prisoners on the roll at Sudbury prison, 405 in the main prison and 92 in the Foston hall annexe.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were released from Sudbury prison during the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, about 1,020 prisoners were discharged from Sudbury prison on licence or on completion of sentence in 1990.

Interpol

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information about convictions of British citizens is passed to Interpol for dissemination to member countries for information; and whether such information is removed from Interpol after any fixed period of time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The national central bureau of Interpol does not keep details of all criminal convictions. It will pass on information about convictions only when a specific request is made by a member country. The bureau will pass on the details which are requested, but these will only be supplied once it has been confirmed through fingerprint checks that the subject of the request and the subject of the conviction are the same person.

Member countries have also been made aware of the effect of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act on convictions in the United Kingdom. The bureau will keep a copy of the information which has been sent; this will normally be destroyed after seven years. The member country recieving the information will have its own rules for how long such information is retained.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make an estimate of the number of offences committed, in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available, by juveniles who have absconded from local authority care to which they have been committed following conviction or pending trial *(a)* in the Metropolitan police area and *(b)* in the remainder of England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the detail required to enable such estimates to be made.

Northern Ireland Prisoners

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision is made for Northern Ireland prisoners who are serving sentences in gaols in England and Wales to serve the remaining part of their sentences in gaols in Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 makes provision for the transfer of a sentenced prisoner on request to another United Kingdom jurisdiction to serve the remainder of his or her sentence.

Radiation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals the South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority has to equip fire rescue unit appliances with geiger counters for use at incidents involving radiation.

Mr. John Patten: Each of the six emergency rescue tenders in the South Yorkshire fire brigade is equipped with a survey meter. The decontamination unit is equipped with a contamination meter. All pumping appliances and special appliances are equipped with one dosimeter per firefighter.

Prisoners (Suicides)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the in-service training of prison staff regarding prisoners who are regarded as potential suicide risks.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 19 December 1990 at columns *206-7*. A working group has since been established by the prison service to oversee the production of a suicide awareness training film for prison staff, and to assess the needs of staff for further guidance and training in relation to the treatment and care of prisoners.

Prisoners

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has plans to improve the links between families in Northern Ireland and relatives who are held in prison in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Rumbold: My noble Friend Lord Ferrers announced in another place on 4 June at columns 577-78 that the Government would carry out a comprehensive review of the arrangements governing the transfer of prisoners to Northern Ireland, either permanently or temporarily, to maintain family ties.

Iraqi Armed Forces

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions since 1979 members of the Iraqi armed forces have been granted entry into the United Kingdom under paragraph 1(1) of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. Statistics collected on passenger admissions do not separately identify members of the armed forces who enter the United Kingdom.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the results of the management review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board will be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: With the concurrence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is responsible with me for the criminal injuries compensation scheme in Great Britain. I have today placed in the Library the report of the wide-ranging management review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board which we commissioned last year.

The review was carried out by a team of management services specialists from the Home Office and Treasury, co-ordinated by a private sector consultant. As well as examining in depth the board's operations, the team took account of practice elsewhere in the civil service, and outside.

In recent times the board has had difficulty in coping with rising business. But with the changes to the scheme and the 60 new staff we provided last year, it is now making great strides. It dealt with 53,000 claims in 1990-91, against 39,000 in 1989-90, and it expects to clear

around 60,000 in 1991-92. Last year, for the first time in 10 years, it dealt with more claims than it received, reducing its backlog, and it has been able to establish that the true level of backlog is much lower than it had reckoned.

Despite this encouraging picture the board needs to gear itself to do still better, cutting delays—which are often still unacceptably long—and further reducing its arrears, while coping with steadily increasing workload.

I therefore welcome the recommendations of the management review, which hold out the prospect of a faster service to applicants, and a much reduced backlog, with no increase in staff. This will be achieved by simplifying procedures, cutting out duplication, and better management. Board members will need to set better guidelines for decisions, improving consistency all round, and enabling staff to deal with the majority of cases, which do not require the special skills of a QC or similarly eminent lawyer. I look to the board and its senior managers to respond positively and quickly to all of these recommendations.

The report also makes some more radical suggestions.

Arrangements under the scheme have not changed much since the board was created in 1964, when it was far smaller and dealt with far fewer claims. The review team does not believe that a board of more than 40 members—drawn from the single discipline of law, and most of whom have other claims upon their time—can reasonably be expected to carry responsibility for managing the organisation effectively on its present scale.

The review recommends that I and the Secretary of State for Scotland should establish a small executive board, which should include members with business experience, and perhaps representatives of victims' interests. We think that this is a useful suggestion, on which we should like to have views from the board itself and from others with an interest in its work.

The review also questions whether the scheme compensates the right people and in the right way. In particular, it discusses concentrating the scheme on injuries attracting higher or lower awards, by varying or imposing lower or upper limits on what awards are payable; excluding more strictly those who by alcohol or drug misuse contribute to their own misfortunes; transferring responsibility for criminal injuries at work to employers; and simplifying the basis of assessment to allow decisions to be taken more consistently and quickly. Finally, it suggests that we should explore whether the insurance industry might administer the scheme on an agency basis, or whether criminal injuries compensation might be amalgamated with other private and public sector compensation schemes to work more effectively and economically. These issues go well beyond the scope of the management review but the Government recognise that there are serious questions which should be open to public discussion.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Small Businesses

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses currently register an annual taxable profit of £35,000 or less; and how many of these businesses have been operating for *(a)* one year or less, *(b)* between one and two years, *(c)* between two and three years and *(d)* for three or more years.

Mr. Maude: It is estimated that about 250,000 incorporated businesses had taxable profits of £35,000 or less in accounting periods ending in the year to 31 March 1989. This is the latest period for which reasonably complete information is available.

The approximate lengths of time for which these businesses had been operating are shown in the table.

	Number
One year or less	20,000
Between one and two years	20,000
Between two and three years	20,000
Three or more years	190,000

Information on unincorporated businesses could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, excluding corporation tax, how much in total will have been lawfully received in tax through and from building societies in each financial year from 1984-85 on the basis of clause 50 *(a)* being enacted and *(b)* not being enacted.

Mr. Maude: Net receipts of income tax from building societies, excluding those subsequently repaid as the result of decisions by the courts, are shown in the second column of the table. The third column shows the corresponding receipts after deducting the estimated amount of income tax due for repayment if clause 50 were not enacted. Such repayment would increase societies' liability to corporation tax.

Years	*£ million*	
1984-85	1,844	1,844
1985-86	2,608	2,608
1986-87	2,481	2,277
1987-88	2,694	2,673
1988-89	2,678	2,677
1989-90	3,655	3,654

Defence Companies (Surpluses)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to implement a recoverable levy on surpluses generated by defence-based and military production companies.

Mr. Maude: No. Increased use of competition, taut contracting and suitable contractual mechanisms are already designed to ensure maximum value for money in defence procurement.

EC Meetings

Mr. Day: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council, the meeting of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union and the inter-institutional meeting with the European Parliament.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Luxembourg on 10 June. I represented the United Kingdom. I also attended a meeting of the intergovernmental conference

on economic and monetary union. The Minister of State attended the inter-institutional meeting with the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 11 June.

Following the meeting on 3 June, the Council again discussed the presidency's proposals for the future of VAT and excise duties in the single market. No agreements were reached and discussions will continue. I reiterated that the United Kingdom remains unconvinced that there is a need for a centrally imposed minimum VAT rate in the single market. But I again made it clear that the United Kingdom has no intention of changing our VAT rate.

On excise duties, member states remain very wide apart. I argued that the minimum duty rates on alcohol and tobacco in the presidency proposals were too low. I reiterated that there would need to be much higher minimum rates or measures such as limits on the amounts of these goods that can be brought into any member state tax paid, if agreement were to be reached.

The Community's contribution towards loans by the G24 to Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania was also discussed. An informal agreement was reached that the first tranche of 100 mecu of an EC guaranteed loan to Hungary could now be released, since a matching sum had been committed by members of the G24 outside the EC, but it was agreed that the release of a first tranche of 150 mecu to Bulgaria should await a similar matching contribution. Discussion of a loan to Romania was deferred until the meeting of ECOFIN in July.

At the ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on EMU, the presidency invited member states' views on key issues, which would inform preparations for the meeting of the European Council later in the month. I noted that a significant number of important issues required further debate in the IGC and suggested that the presidency might want to refer to these, while also registering the consensus achieved on issues such as the importance of convergence, in its report to the European Council.

Our negotiating position in the IGC remains unchanged. The United Kingdom cannot accept changes to the treaty of Rome that would bind us to move to a single currency or a single monetary policy without a separate decision by the United Kingdom Government and Parliament.

The inter-institutional meeting with the European Parliament enabled Members of the European Parliament to put their views on the EMU IGC to Finance Ministers. The meeting was purely consultative in nature.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from the United States federal criminal prosecution authorities for assistance with documentation on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Maples: None.

TRANSPORT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year for the last 10 years, and for each port in the United Kingdom, the number of tonnes of nuclear waste that was imported.

Mr. McLoughlin: Nuclear waste is not imported into this country.

Primary Aggregates

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the amount of primary aggregates used in *(a)* construction and *(b)* maintenance of the railway network over the past 10 years, in (i) tonnes and (ii) as a proportion of total national aggregates' consumption.

Mr. Freeman: The figures for purchases of ballast by British Rail are as follows:

	Tonnes (millions)
1986-87	2·9
1987-88	2·9
1988-89	2·7
1989-90	2·4
1990-91	2·2

The other information is not available.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the amount of primary aggregates used in *(a)* construction and *(b)* maintenance of motorways and trunk roads over the past 10 years, in (i) tonnes and (ii) as a proportion of total national aggregates consumption.

Mr. Chope: Detailed information across the whole range of road construction is not kept by the Department. Estimates are, of necessity, coarse. Industry estimates show some 32 per cent. of United Kingdom aggregates production is used in road construction and maintenance. This figure has remained stable over the past 10 years. The Department estimates that in 1980 around 10 per cent. of aggregates consumption—21 million tonnes—was used in the construction and maintenance of motorways and trunk roads. This compares with estimates of 12 per cent. of aggregates consumption—36 million tonnes—in 1989.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the amount of primary aggregates used in *(a)* construction and *(b)* maintenance of local roads over the past 10 years, in (i) tonnes and (ii) as a proportion of total national aggregates' consumption.

Mr. Chope: Detailed information across the whole range of road construction is not kept by the Department. Estimates are, of necessity, coarse. Industry estimates show some 32 per cent. of United Kingdom aggregates production is used in road construction and maintenance. This figure has remained stable over the past 10 years. The Department estimates that in 1980, 22 per cent. of aggregates consumption—43 million tonnes—was used in the construction and maintenance of local roads. This compares with estimates of 20 per cent.—60 million tonnes —in 1989.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated requirement for primary aggregates arising from the Government's road building programme, set out in the May 1988 White Paper "Roads to Prosperity."

Mr. Chope: The requirement for primary aggregates is estimated at 120,000 tonnes per kilometre. The

Government's road building programme, set out in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" established a target of 4,247 kilometres—2,655 miles. The overall requirement is therefore in the region of 510 million tonnes.

Railway Crossings

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will give urgent consideration to the installation of barriers at the open railway crossing in Tirydail, Ammanford and at other open crossings on the Heart of Wales railway line;

(2) if he will bring forward the proposed installation of barriers at the open crossing in Cilyrychen, Llandybie.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Stott criteria for the conversion of automatic open crossings to half-barriered crossings take into account the daily use by both road and rail traffic. In the case of Tirydail crossing, traffic is not sufficiently heavy to warrant upgrading.

The only crossing on the central Wales line which met the upgrading criteria is at Cilyrychen. Conversion is scheduled for early next year. It is for British Rail to determine the conversion programme in the light of its resources available to carry out the work.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many open railway crossings there are, and how many have barriers, on the Heart of Wales line from Swansea to Shrewsbury; and if he will identify their locations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is as follows:

Location	*Type of barrier*
Pantyffynon	Hand operated gates
Tirydail	AOCL
Brynmarlais	AOCL
Llandebie	AOCL
Cilyrychen	AOCL
Ffairfach	AOCL
Glanrhyd	Open
Llangadog	AOCL
Llanwrda	Open
Llandovery	Trainmen operated barriers
Berthddu	Open
Llandrindod Wells	Trainmen operated barriers
Dolau	AOCL
Bucknell	AOCL
Craven Arms	Manned barriers

AOCL—Automatic open crossing locally monitored.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those open crossings in Wales that have already been fitted with half-barriers as recommended by the Stott report and those earmarked for conversion in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following automatic open crossings in Wales have been converted to half-barrier crossings under the Stott programme:—

Harlech Morfa
Llanbadarn Fawr
Maes (Criccieth)
Ynyslas

Those at Tygwyn, Cil-y-rychen and Llanboidy are due for conversion in 1991, 1992 and 1992 respectively.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many open railway crossings in Britain are to be fitted with barriers in accordance with the Stott recommendation for each year from 1988 to 1992 and thereafter.

Mr. McLoughlin: Eighty-three automatic open crossings were identified for conversion to half-barrier crossings by the Stott criteria.

Forty-six have been converted so far; the work was carried out as follows:

	Number
1988	13
1989	21
1990	10
1991	2

Sixteen of the remaining 37 conversions are scheduled for this year and 21 in 1992.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textiles

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what reaction he has made to the proposals from the Greek, Spanish and Portuguese Governments for use of European Community funds to assist their textile and clothing industries; and what assessment he has made of the likely impact on activity and employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: I have not been informed of any such proposals. I am having inquiries made and will write to my hon. Friend.

WALES

Trunk Roads

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total expenditure by his Department on major improvement schemes on *(a)* the A487 trunk road, *(b)* the A483 trunk road and *(c)* the A470 trunk road in each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Total costs including design and land acquisition for major improvement schemes costing over £3 million completed, in progress and in preparation, for each year since 1979 are given in the table.

£ million

	A487	*A483*	*A470*
1979-80	2·2	0·4	6·0
1980-81	2·6	0·2	9·2
1981-82	0·9	0·2	3·0
1982-83	1·8	0·1	5·9
1983-84	0·3	0·5	21·4
1984-85	—	0·7	18·2
1985-86	0·6	3·9	10·0
1986-87	0·4	10·6	4·4
1987-88	0·6	8·6	3·5
1988-89	0·6	9·9	2·6
1989-90	2·2	11·9	3·4
[1]1990-91	5·8	8·8	5·7
Total	18·0	55·8	93·3

[1] Provisional.

Treatment of Pain

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial resources have been allocated to the Welsh Office budget this year for the relief and treatment of pain.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is for individual health authorities to determine from within their annual overall resource allocations, and in the light of local circumstances and priorities, the level of funding which is available for the relief and treatment of pain.

Community Charge

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the amount of community charge payable by each eligible adult in a household of one, two, three, four or five adults where one, two or no adults have been exempted due to severe mental handicap in 1991-92 after the community charge reduction scheme has been applied, for each level of assumed rates bill in £50 bands from £150 to £500, in £100 bands from £500 to £1,500, £1,750 and £2,000, where in each case the community charge is set at each £10 increment between £140 and £600.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The community charge payable, on average, within each Welsh charging authority, net of £140 reduction and the community charge reduction scheme, by each eligible adult for 1991-92 is given in the table. The charge shown is the same irrespective of the number of adults in a household. Severely mentally impaired adults do not pay the community charge.

The Welsh community charge reduction scheme is based on the difference between the notional average domestic rates per adult in 1989-90 and the average community charge paid in 1990-91 for each area. The reduction is this difference less £37 and is payable to every eligible adult in each qualifying community.

	Average community charge payable (£)[1]
Alyn and Deeside	118
Colwyn	127
Delyn	125
Glyndwr	96
Rhuddlan	139
Wrexham Maelor	101
Carmarthen	61
Ceredigion	68
Dinefwr	63
Llanelli	81
Preseli Pembrokeshire	67
South Pembrokeshire	73
Blaenau Gwent	67
Islwyn	80
Monmouth	108
Newport	125
Torfaen	105
Aberconwy	110
Arfon	79
Dwyfor	91
Meirionnydd	98
Ynys Môn	103
Cynon Valley	50
Merthyr Tydfil	68
Ogwr	67
Rhondda	26
Rhymney Valley	94
Taff Ely	96
Brecknock	87
Montgomeryshire	77
Radnorshire	86
Cardiff	112
Vale of Glamorgan	109
Port Talbot	75
Lliw Valley	64
Neath	76
Swansea	113
Total Wales	92

[1] Net of Budget Reduction and CCRS. Average for district.

Further Education

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (i) what was the total cost of training further education governors in Wales;

(2) if he will indicate the total cost of implementing the Government's reforms to the structure of governing bodies of further education colleges in Wales as a result of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available.

Drinking Water

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects all water supplies in Wales to meet the drinking water standards set by the EC drinking water quality directive; and what is the number of people currently supplied from non-complying sources.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Public water supplies already comply with the great majority of the standards in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 1147) which implement EC standards or set more stringent standards. Where relaxations from the standards have been authorised under regulation 4 or undertakings accepted under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989, most should comply with the standards by 1995. Undertakings have been accepted which relate to all the zones supplied by the companies my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has appointed. The existence of a relaxation or undertaking does not mean, necessarily, that the water supplied does not meet the standards set in the water quality regulations. Copies of all the relaxations and undertakings have been placed in the Library of the House.

Universities and Colleges Funding Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce details of the funding and staffing arrangements for the Universities and Colleges Funding Council for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I will announce detailed proposals for the new higher education funding council at the time legislation is introduced in Parliament.

Casualty Units, Gower

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new attendances there were in 1990-91 between 10 pm and 8 am at Singleton, Morriston and Neath casualty units; and how many of these at each were residents of West Swansea and Gower.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is not centrally available in the form requested. However, data collected to

inform the Welsh Office review of Singleton minor casualty unit (MCU) indicated that during the period 1 June 1988 to 31 May 1989, new minor casualty attendances at Singleton totalled 1,318 between 10 pm and 8 am, an average of four per night.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been each year's funding by his Department to enable a night service to be offered at Singleton casualty unit.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Funding in respect of the minor casualty unit at Singleton hospital was agreed as part of the cost of reorganisation of services in West Glamorgan consequent upon the opening of Morriston hospital. However, the distribution of funding within its overall allocation is a matter for West Glamorgan health authority.

Prince of Wales Hospital, Rhydlafar

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list his allocation separately to each health authority in Wales of *(a)* knee and *(b)* hip replacement operations to be carried out from Welsh Office central funds at the treatment centre at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar, near Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Allocations are based on established referral patterns and currently these are:

	Hips	*Knees*	*Others*
West Glamorgan	37	5	3
Gwent	25	16	7
Mid Glamorgan	19	6	21
Powys	14	1	1
East Dyfed	5	1	0
South Glamorgan	32	10	8
Clwyd	2	0	0
Pembrokeshire	26	11	0
Gwynedd	0	0	0
Total	160	50	40

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from patients, members of the public, Clwyd health authority or the relevant community health councils concerning the recent return of a patient requiring an artificial knee joint operation to Clwyd without treatment from the treatment centre at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have not received any representations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from Clwyd health authority, community health councils in Clwyd, or otherwise, concerning the allocation of knee replacement operations to be carried out with Welsh Office central funds at the treatment centre at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar, near Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have not received any representations on this matter.

Opted-out Schools

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether opting-out schools in Wales will be allowed to apply for a change of the nature of the school in less than five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend is still considering whether it will be in the best interests of grant-maintained schools in Wales to alter his policy that they should not normally be able to change their character within five years of incorporation. That policy gives him the option of approving proposals for change when there are sufficiently strong reasons.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of jobs created by the activities of the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 25 February 1991.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of Friday 7 June, what was the reason for the delay in placing copies of the Welsh Office report in the Vote Office and the Library until the day after publication and two days after they had been made available to the media; and if he will make it his policy in future to make copies of publications available to the media, the House and to the individual hon. and right hon. Members at the same time.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Our normal practice is to place copies of inspectorate reports in the Library of the House, further copies being available on demand from the Welsh Office. The delay in placing copies of the recent three reports in the Library of the House was due to administrative oversight for which I apologise on behalf of the Department.

Community Homes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what factors determined the publication date for reports on three community homes in Wales following investigations undertaken in 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 7 June 1991]:* The reports of inspections of secure units at Ty Mawr, Silverbrook and Llwyncelyn community homes were published as soon as possible following the completion of consultation on the drafts with the relevant local authorities.

Future reports will be issued within four months of the inspection. Any actions requiring urgent attention by the relevant authority will as now be brought to their notice immediately.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Poverty

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Presbytery of Glasgow since 14 May in respect of world poverty; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Overseas Development Administration has received a letter on world poverty from the Presbytery of Glasgow. A reply has been sent.

Iraq

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held between representatives of the relief agencies responsible for the relief effort for refugees in Iraq and British military representatives.

Mrs. Chalker: The relief agencies in northern Iraq and Turkey have worked closely with the allied forces. They meet regularly with the military commanders of Operation Haven.

Bangladesh

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of plans for meeting long-term rehabilitation needs in Bangladesh following the annual meeting of the Bangladesh aid consortium on 29 and 30 May.

Mrs. Chalker: At the Bangladesh aid consortium meeting, the World bank announced that the total indications of financial support from bilateral and multilateral donors amounted to $2·3 billion. This level of resources is sufficient to meet Bangladesh's relief, rehabilitation and overall development needs for 1991-92.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to assist the Government of Sierra Leone in response to its appeal for aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *562*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The Gulf (Disappearances)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made concerning the disappearance of Roseanna della Casa, and the deaths of Nick della Casa and Charles Maxwell, in the Turkish-Iraqi border region *(a)* to the Turkish authorities, *(b)* to the Iraqi authorities and *(c)* to allied military authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has made and is making widespread representations to try and trace Mrs. Rosanna della Casa. Following representations made by Her Majesty's ambassador at Ankara, the Turkish authorities have extended full co-operation. The senior Iraqi diplomat in London and the Iraqi representatives to the ceasefire talks in Riyadh were asked to help. British embassies in the area made inquiries and sought the help of the Governments of neighbouring countries. We have maintained frequent contact with coalition military forces in northern Iraq. Urgent attempts to find Mrs. della Casa continue.

No representations have been made regarding the deaths of Mr. Nicholas della Casa and Mr. Charles Maxwell. The cause of their deaths has not yet been determined.

COREPER

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British civil servants have been appointed or seconded to work for the Committee of Permanent Representatives serving the European Council of Ministers; and what is Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the effectiveness of COREPER in the development of European Community policies.

Mr. Garel-Jones: COREPER is composed of representatives of the Twelve member states and meets to prepare decisions for the Council of Ministers, a job it has done effectively since the Community was founded. The Committee meets in two formats: COREPER ambassadors, comprising member states' permanent representatives to the EC, and COREPER deputies. The United Kingdom's permanent representative is Sir John Kerr. He heads the United Kingdom permanent representation which numbers 65 British civil servants.

Syria

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance was given during the period when diplomatic relations with Syria were broken about the steps which Syria was required to take to ensure a restoration of diplomatic relations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We consistently made it clear that we could not consider restoring diplomatic relations without firm evidence that Syria had given up support for international terrorism.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances were given by the Syrian Government before the restoration of diplomatic relations on 28 November 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in the House on 28 November 1990 —at columns 867-88—the assurances we had received that enabled us to resume relations.

Gordievsky Family

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been received to representations for Maria and Anna Gordievsky, with their mother Leila Gordievsky, to be able to come to Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This case has rightly attracted public concern in the United Kingdom, and has also received sympathetic attention in a number of articles in the Soviet press. We have made repeated oral and written representations to the Soviet Government, including at high levels, about the reunification of the Gordievsky family. The Soviet authorities have frequently indicated that they wish to resolve this matter, but have not given a positive and substantive response to our many representations. Mrs. Leila Gordievsky and her two small daughters, Mariya and Anna, are entirely innocent of any wrong-doing. We believe that there can be no justification for the Soviet authorities' refusal to them of permission to come to Britain to be reunited with Mr. Oleg Gordievsky, in accordance with their clearly expressed wish. The Soviet Government's denial to them of the right to travel stands in clear contravention of the detailed provisions relating to family reunification and freedom of travel in the documents of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, to which the Soviet Union is a party. We will continue to press this human rights case strongly until the family are granted their right to travel.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to accede to a request from the Gibraltar Government to negotiate the entry of Gibraltar into the EC customs union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Gibraltar Government have not made such a request. If they did, we would consider it in the light of the prevailing circumstances, including our assessment of the benefits of such a step for Gibraltar.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the financial consequences for Gibraltar of its joining the EC customs union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We keep this under review and are in close touch with the Gibraltar Government about the cost/benefits of Gibraltar joining the Community customs territory.

Germany (Nuclear Facilities)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any of the treaties endorsed by the European Council of Ministers in establishing a unified Germany provide for the application of Euratom safeguards to nuclear plants, facilities and materials located in the former German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The integration of the former German Democratic Republic into the European Community required neither a new treaty nor amendments to existing Community treaties. In principle the provisions of the treaties have applied in the territory of the former German Democratic Republic since unification. A package of measures was however agreed covering temporary and strictly defined derogations. No such derogations apply to united German's obligations under the Euratom treaty of 1957, chapter VII of which provides for the application of Euratom safeguards in all member states.

Libya

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Libyan Government are required to take to ensure the restoration of diplomatic relations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We cannot consider improved relations until we have proof that Libya has completely broken off its support for international terrorism, including the IRA. People are still being killed in Britain with Libyan-supplied weapons.

Mozambique

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on interference by Kenya in the internal affairs of Mozambique, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are aware of claims about Kenya's alleged interference in Mozambique, but we know of no evidence to support them.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has obtained a copy of the financial memorandum of Guy's hospital, referred to on 29 April, *Official Report*, column 22; and if he will make a statement on its implications for patient care and staffing levels.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. The paper was an internal working document of the Guy's and Lewisham Trust, prepared to assist it in developing its financial plans for 1991-92 and is now out of date.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been spent by the Health Education Authority on the "Look After Your Heart" campaign in each of the last three years; and what is the planned level of expenditure for 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: "Look After Your Heart", England's coronary heart disease prevention programme, is jointly managed and funded by the Health Education Authority —HEA—and the Department of Health. Spending in the last three years, taking both basic allocations and special grants made during the year, has been as follows:

Year	*Expenditure*
1988-89	4,550,000
1989-90	4,000,000
1990-91	5,500,000

A basic allocation of £5,300,000 has been approved for 1991-92. There are also departmental and HEA programmes for the specific risk factors, such as smoking, which contribute to the work on prevention of coronary heart disease. Additional support is also provided through commerce and industry through the workplace project and the health education work of regional and district health authorities.

Child Abuse

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage increase of child abuse cases for the last available five years in the Carlisle constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information collected centrally about child abuse relates to the children and young persons on child protection registers for each local authority with social services responsibilities. The data were first collected in 1988. The number of children on the child protection register in Cumbria on 31 March 1988 was 226; on 31 March 1990 the number was 453.

Physiotherapists

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the training of physiotherapists; and how much his Department spends annually on such training.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. Funding for physiotherapy training is a matter for individual health authorities to determine in the light of local needs and priorities.

Care Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretry of State for Health if he will meet a delegation from the Doncaster community health council, local councillors and hon. Members to discuss the future of Doncaster royal infirmary, Mexborough Montagu hospital and Conisbrough hospital and the development of a strategy for continuing care services for the elderly.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes.

Medical Confidentiality

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ensure that medical confidentiality is maintained for patients in the billing arrangements between health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Personal health information is strictly confidential. It may be disclosed only on a need-to-know basis by authorised persons, and only to the extent authorised. It must be anonymised unless it is essential for the recipient to know the identity of the patient. Health authorities have been reminded of their responsibility for safeguarding confidentiality in the context of contracting for health services, and have been strongly advised to draw up procedures under the guidance of their directors of public health. In particular, references to diagnosis or operations in contract information must be coded. Any breach of confidentiality by NHS staff is regarded as a serious disciplinary offence which may result in immediate dismissal.

Mile End Hospital

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of how waiting lists are affected by the Royal London hospital trust's agreement with the Charterhouse clinical research unit concerning Mile End hospital;

(2) whether the Royal London hospital trust sought his prior approval for its agreement with Charterhouse clinical research unit concerning the Mile End hospital;

(3) if he will make a statement about the terms of the agreement between the Royal London hospital trust and the Charterhouse clinical research unit concerning Mile End hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No agreement has been reached between the Royal London hospital trust and Charterhouse clinical research unit.

Pregnancy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money was given to *(a)* the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and *(b)* the Life care and housing trust for the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department gives no money to either organisation.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any proposals to issue guidelines on the use of the chorionic villus sampling test; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The use of chorion villus sampling is a matter of clinical judgment.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated additional cost to a hospital in respect of the procedures required to be undertaken in recovering a kidney for transplant; whether any recompense is currently available to hospitals in respect of such additional costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the cost of organ recovery procedures is not collected centrally. We are actively considering the possibility of identifying and reimbursing hospitals for costs incurred in organ donation.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the cost to the national health service of an abortion at *(a)* under 12 weeks' gestation, *(b)* under 18 weeks' gestation, *(c)* under 24 weeks' gestation and *(d)* under 42 weeks' gestation in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the expenditure covered by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial year *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department spent approximately £147,000 on hospitality in 1989-90; £158,000 in 1990-91; for 1991-92 information is only available on spend until 30 April totalling £12,000.

NHS Beds

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what has been the number of beds available to (i) NHS patients and (ii) private patients in *(a)* Guy's

hospital, *(b)* King's College hospital, *(c)* St. Thomas's hospital, *(d)* the Lewisham and North Southwark health authority, *(e)* the Camberwell health authority and *(f)* the West Lambeth health authority at the beginning of each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 May 1991]:* The information that is available centrally is given in the tables. The number of NHS beds is not a reliable indicator of patient activity. Activity in the three district health authorities listed in the tables increased during the period as follows:

Number of in-patients and day cases treated 1979 to 1989-90

	1979	1989-90	Percentage increase
West Lambeth HA	37,549	42,692	14
Camberwell HA	37,478	46,262	23
Lewisham HA	59,960	61,518	3

The number of NHS beds authorised for use by private patients is not a measure of private patient activity. These beds are also available to health service patients and are not particular beds reserved for the exclusive use of private patients. Reliable information about the number of private patients treated is not available centrally.

NHS available beds (average over the year)
1979 to 1986 calendar year, 1987-88 to 1989-90 financial year

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
West Lambeth HA	2,274	2,239	2,248	2,100	2,119	2,066	1,993	1,887	1,715	1,537	1,539
St. Thomas's	956	971	990	880	929	876	854	842	819	744	861
Camberwell HA	1,432	1,366	1,332	1,289	1,279	1,232	1,264	1,232	1,242	1,147	1,108
Kings College Hospital	603	603	586	602	590	606	609	599	602	541	538
Lewisham and North Southwark HA	2,336	2,257	2,208	2,185	2,194	2,058	2,048	1,910	1,718	1,657	1,583
Guy's Hospital	851	886	885	852	853	779	749	740	795	790	825

Source: 1979-86 Form SH3
1987-88 Form SH3A
1989-90 Form KP70

Number of authorised paybeds at beginning of each financial year since 1979

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
West Lambeth health authority[2]	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	[1]38	[1]38	[1]38	[1]38
St. Thomas'[3]	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	[1]38	[1]38	[1]38	[1]38
Camberwell health authority	41	41	41	41	41	45	45	45	[1]45	[1]41	[1]41
King's College Hospital[4]	40	40	40	40	40	38	38	38	38	38	38
Lewisham and North Southwark health authority[2]	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69
Guy's Hospital	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64

Notes on table for authorised paybeds:
[1] Estimated figure—information held relates to the number of bed days.
[2] Within Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham area health authority between 1979 and 1981.
[3] Figures for 1979 and 1985 are based on the district group authorisation given.
[4] Figures from 1984 are estimates based on the district authorisation given.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Strikes

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many days have been lost by teachers through strike action for each of the past 11 years; and what was the number of children affected.

Mr. Fallon: Information on days lost by teachers due to strike action and on the number of children affected by such action is not centrally recorded by the Department. However, figures for the United Kingdom provided by the Department of Employment show the following numbers of days lost due to strikes by all employees in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, including both teachers and non-teaching staff:

	Days lost
[1]1980	127,880
[1]1981	45,364
[1]1982	97,241
1983	19,455
1984	248,414
1985	851,518
1986	315,064
1987	133,429
1988	27,658
1989	1,300
1990	30,370

[1] Figures for 1980-82 also include employees in further and higher education establishments.

Primary Classes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to bring in legislation to set a maximum class size for primary schools.

Mr. Fallon: No. The deployment of teachers and the internal organisation of schools are properly matters for local decision.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the expenditure covered by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure on hospitality met from Department of Education and Science running costs totalled £89,000 for 1989-90, £61,000 for 1990-91 and £4,000 for the first month of 1991-92.

REPLAN

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider his decision to discontinue the funding of the REPLAN educational development programme.

Mr. Eggar: No. The REPLAN programme will have largely fulfilled the purpose for which it was established when its current term is completed in October this year. My right hon. and learned Friend will however be making additional funding available to the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the further education unit for the production and dissemination of a manual of guidance on education and training for unemployed adults which will further promote the lessons and experience gained from the REPLAN programme over the last seven years. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 23 January 1991, *Official Report*, columns *196-97*, it is now for the adult education providers to continue to develop provision for the adult unemployed, drawing on the lessons learned under REPLAN, and in particular working with the training and enterprise councils who are responsible for delivering the major training programmes for the adult unemployed.

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his Department during the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Eggar: The titles of the video recordings purchased by the Department of Education and Science in the financial year 1990-91 are as follows:

Agreeing to agree
Autism: behind an invisible wall
Early stages: school play
First things first
Food without fear
Happy accident
Helen's story
Hindi Urdu Bol Chaal
An inside job
Meetings, bloody meetings
Motley crew
Passport to success: National Record of Vocational Achievement.
Through the maze: a guide to information sources in education
Time for training
Trouble with training
Working mathematically with infants.

During the financial year 1991-92 to date the following video recordings have been purchased:

Building the perfect team
Databases
Teleworking
30 ways to make time
Working together: English in the national curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria are used for the determination of capital allocations for those schools which have held grant-maintained status for more than one year.

Mr. Eggar: The same criteria for determining capital allocations apply to the 29 schools that have been grant maintained for more than a year as those which have entered the sector more recently. All schools receive a formula allocation for small capital works based on their pupil numbers. In addition, all schools can bid for named capital projects. Priority in these allocations has been given to schools' most pressing needs. These include projects related to the health and safety of pupils, and to projects concerned with the introduction of the national curriculum, especially in science and technology.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the capital allocation for each grant-maintained school for *(a)* 1990-91, where appropriate and *(b)* 1991-92 and the purpose of each capital allocation.

Mr. Eggar: The table lists the allocations for named capital projects for grant-maintained schools to begin in the two years. I shall write to the hon. Member when decisions are taken about further allocations for 1991-92.

In addition to named project allocations, each grant-maintained school is eligible to claim an amount of capital grant calculated according to a formula which takes account of the number of pupils on roll. The grant is used for small capital works and the purchase of equipment. For 1990-91 the formula was £13,000 plus £6 per pupil on roll. For 1991-92 the formula is £19,000 plus £9 per pupil on roll.

School	*Amount allocated* £'000s	£'000s	*Purpose of allocation*
	Projects beginning in 1990-91	1991-92	
Adams grammar school	—	21	Removal of asbestos
Audenshaw high school	575	—	Repairs, room conversion and new arts rooms
	—	225	Room conversion and rewiring
Bacup and Rawtenstall grammar school	713	—	Replace temporary accommodation, roof repairs and laboratory renovation
Bankfield high school	480	—	Improve technology, art language accommodation
Baverstock GM school	275	—	Repairs and removal of asbestos

School	Amount allocated £'000s Projects beginning in 1990-91	£'000s 1991-92	Purpose of allocation
Beechen Cliff school	480	—	Kitchen and dining room
	—	320	Technology block
Bishopshalt school	—	206	Science block extension
Bournemouth grammar school	—	300	Repairs (including roof repairs and rewiring)
Bridgewater Hall school	—	65	Boiler replacement
Bullers Wood school for girls	—	228	Refurbishment and extension of 3 laboratories
Cardinal Vaughan memorial school	219	—	Roof replacement
Carre's grammar school	—	630	Technology and laboratories extension
Castle Hall GM school	11	—	Removal of asbestos
	—	105	Roof renewal and concrete frame repairs
Claremont high school	328	—	Repairs and renovation of laboratories
	—	120	Technology rooms and health and safety
Colyton grammar school	950	—	New technology block
Ecclesbourne school	—	400	Repairs (including re-roofing and rewiring)
Francis Bacon school	—	105	Modern language classrooms
Handsworth grammar school for boys	—	953	New science block
Heckmondwike grammar school	198	—	Repairs
	—	252	Technology refurbishment
Hendon school	180	200	Window replacement and lab refurbishment
Lancaster Royal grammar school	155	—	Rewiring, room conversion and new washrooms
London nautical school	100	—	Repairs
	—	50	Rewiring
London oratory school	151	—	Renovation to laboratories
	—	216	Design and technology
Long Field high school	—	236	Roof repairs
Netherthorpe school	65	—	Staff room and administration
Old Swinford hospital	35	—	Repairs
	—	500	Science laboratories
Pate's grammar school	—	1,500	Replace existing accommodation
Queen Elizabeth's GM school for boys	261	—	Repairs and boilder replacement
Queen Elizabeth's grammar school	100	503	Replace temporary accommodation
Queensbury school	57	—	Repairs and health and safety
Ribston Hall high school	295	—	New technology unit
St. Francis Xavier's college	122	—	Roof repairs and asbestos removal
	—	200	Repairs
Skegness grammar school	92	—	Classroom improvements
	—	63	Modernise kitchen and canteen
Small Heath school	50	—	Roof repairs and rewiring
	—	105	Replace windows and improve maths suite
Southfield school for girls	—	650	Technology block

School	Amount allocated £'000s	£'000s	Purpose of allocation
	Projects beginning in 1990-91	1991-92	
Southlands school	46	—	Conversion to design and technology
	—	113	Re-roofing
St. James' CE school	650	—	Replace classroom block
The Grammar School for Girls, Wilmington	44	—	Repairs
	—	45	Conversion to CDT
The Kings school	128	—	2 new classrooms
Watford boys grammar school	—	80	Re-roofing
Wilson's school	200	—	Technology workshop and room conversion

Note: The figures exclude £138,000 of support for emergency projects allocated during 1990-91.

Education and Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the discussions he has held with *(a)* local education authorities and *(b)* other organisations about the future of adult education following the publication of the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st century".

Mr. Eggar: Although my right hon. and learned Friend regularly discusses the future of education with representatives of local education authorities and other organisations, no meetings specifically on the further education of adults have taken place since the publication of the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century."

Teachers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his department's latest estimate of the number of qualified teachers who are not currently teaching.

Mr. Fallon *[pursuant to his reply, 21 May 1991, c. 423]:* In March 1988 there were estimated to be 385,000 qualified teachers aged under 60 who were not in regular teaching service. This total includes all those who had previously taught or been trained in England and Wales, except for those who were in full-time or part-time teaching service in the maintained or non-maintained sector in England and Wales, or had retired from teaching.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Schemes (North Staffordshire)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the expenditure on Government-financed and assisted training schemes in North Staffordshire for each of the last five years; and what it is projected to be in the current year.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the form requested.

The following figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are for the Staffordshire training and enterprise council—TEC—which became operational on 15 October 1990. Prior to that date the Training Agency area office administered the Staffordshire area.

The TEC boundaries are not coterminous with those of the area office. Staffordshire area office covered the whole of Staffordshire whereas the TEC boundaries exclude part of south Staffordshire.

Staffordshire AO/TEC: Actual Expenditure

Year	£ million
1990-91	30·14

Staffordshire TEC: Budget Allocation

Year	£ million
1991-92	31·59

Petrol Containers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received following the Health and Safety Executive's directive that petrol may be sold only in one or two gallon containers at filling stations and the withdrawal of the use of five gallon approved containers which are used by boat owners and inshore fishermen; and what effects he expects this will have on safety at sea.

Mr. Forth: None. No HSE directive has been issued restricting the sale of petrol to one or two gallon containers or prohibiting the use of 5 gallon containers.

Storage of petrol in 5 gallon containers is subject to the discretionary powers of Petroleum Licensing Authorities under the Petroleum (Consolidation) Act 1928, the Petroleum-Spirit (Motor Vehicles &c) Regulations 1929 and the Petroleum-Spirit (Plastic Containers) Regulations 1982. Licensing authorities would take into account the suitability of the containers themselves and the individual circumstances of the storage place.

Citizen's Europe Advisory Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has had any recent meeting or communication with the Citizen's Europe advisory service in regard to employment mobility within the European Community.

Mr. Forth: No.

ENERGY

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the European Energy Council last discussed the application of Euratom safeguards to nuclear materials and facilities within the European Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The application of Euratom safeguards has not been a Council agenda item in recent years. When such matters are discussed they are taken by the General Affairs Council.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implementation in the United Kingdom of EC regulation No. 220/90 (Euratom) on nuclear materials inventories.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Regulation No. 220/90 constituted a minor amendment to Commission Regulation (Euratom) No. 3227/76. This was to cover possible circumstances where nuclear material is concentrated by processing to a level above that specified in article 2 of regulation No. 9—428/60.

Sensitive Buildings

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *384*, if he will define sensitive buildings.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A sensitive building is one which contains or could give access to information or material which needs to be protected in accordance with defined Government requirements or prudent management practice.

Sellafield

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for energy whether people entering the BNFL dining room at Sellafield are required to wear *(a)* special clothing, *(b)* body monitors for radiation, *(c)* helmets or *(d)* shoe covers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that all personnel leaving controlled areas are required to monitor themselves in a manner appropriate to that area. I am told that there is no requirement in all cases to undergo a change of clothing, although when leaving an area in which contamination may arise it is necessary to remove overalls. It is not unusual for employees to wear their radiation dosimeters when outside controlled areas—indeed in some circumstances it is a requirement of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. It is thus to be expected that diners will be wearing a range of clothing/radiation dosimeters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether building 215 at Sellafied is a sensitive building; whether it is in an active area; what controls are applied to people entering the building; whether people entering the building are required to wear *(a)* special clothing, *(b)* body monitors for radiation, *(c)* helmets or *(d)* shoe covers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that Sellafield management consider B215 to have a degree of sensitivity. Building B215 handles radioactive material and is within a much larger active area, known as the separation area. People entering the building are required to be dressed for standard entry to an active area—factory shoes and socks, a laboratory coat or overall and radiation monitors are needed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will name the two people referred to in his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *384;* and what evidence he has that the two people referred to were demonstrators.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the persons to which my answer of 7 June, *Official Report* columns *383-84*, referred gave their names and addresses as Anne Marie Black and Chris Drake of Blue Gate, Greenham Common Womens Peace Camp, Newbury.

Their address and the press release from CORE—Cumbrian's Opposed to a Radioactive Environment—suggest that they were demonstrators.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *384*, whether the two people apprehended on Thursday, 23 May had entered *(a)* building 215 or *(b)* the vitrification plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the intruders' claim that they entered B215 has been investigated and that there is no evidence that they gained entrance to this building or to the vitrification plant.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *384*, whether British Nuclear Fuels plc kept his Department's officials fully informed of the official statements made to the press by BNFL following the apprehension of two people within the Sellafield perimeter fence on Thursday, 23 May.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that to be the case.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what warnings were given to the two people apprehended within the Sellafield perimeter fence on Thursday, 23 May about the circumstances in which they would be required to undergo a body scrub.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The two people were monitored for contamination in the presence of the police officers. No contamination was detected and no action was needed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy further to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *384*, if he will now review security at Sellafield.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Security at Sellafield is kept under constant review by British Nuclear Fuels plc, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and the Government.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the nature of the process undertaken at building 215 at Sellafield.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Building B215 is primarily a store containing the highly active waste arising from

reprocessing, held awaiting vitrification in the adjacent plant. The function of the building is to maintain the concentration of the material, the temperature and the consistency in the desired range.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the operational log for building 215 at Sellafield for Thursday, 23 May.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No, this is a matter for BNFL.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *384*, which security fences were breached by the two people apprehended at Sellafield on Thursday 23 May; and whether they entered an active area.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In order to enter the active separation area, the intruders must have penetrated both the factory boundary fence and the separation area boundary.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, pursuant to his answer of 10 June on multiple share applications, all stockbrokers involved in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry have now supplied Touche Ross with a full list of names corresponding to their nominee accounts.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the terms of the regional electricity companies' offers, stockbrokers were required to supply information on the underlying beneficiaries of applications made by those firms either on bulk manager application forms or on individual forms; failing this, the applications would have been rejected. Touche Ross has had access to this information in connection with its audit activities.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answers of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *267* and of 10 June, to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West on representations from stockbrokers involved in electricity privatisation, what proportion of the fees and commisssions owing to the five stockbrokers referred to have so far been paid.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The payments already made, in respect of the admissible claims of these and other eligible brokers, are the amounts which the calculation and audit of their claims has shown with sufficient certainty to be due to them. In many cases a balancing payment may become due and my Department expects to make such payments shortly. A small number of brokers have not received any payments pending the clarification of queries arising from their claims or the audit process.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answers of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *267* and of 10 June to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West on representations from stockbrokers involved in electricity privatisation, what arrangements he has made to meet the principals of the stockbroking firms concerned, together with Touche Ross.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Secretary of State has no plans to meet the principals of any of the stockbroking firms concerned. I expect Touche Ross, together with officials from my Department, to be able to resolve all outstanding issues.

Home Energy Efficiency

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has yet received any recommendations from the Energy Action Grants Agency with regard to the future operation of the home energy efficiency scheme in the Scottish area 14; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the Energy Action Grants Agency has received a report from consultants on the future operation of the home energy efficiency scheme in Scottish area 14 and will be making recommendations to my Department shortly.

SCOTLAND

Homelessness

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were registered homeless in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Renfrew district during the past 12 months for which records are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available information relates to 1989-90. During that period, district councils in Strathclyde assessed as homeless 4,901 households who applied to them under the homelessness legislation. The corresponding figure for Renfrew was 359. Approximately 3,000 returns for 1989-90, mostly from Glasgow, are outstanding. It is not possible to say what percentage of the applicants to whom these related might have been assessed as homeless. The 1989-90 returns did not collect the number of persons in applicant households.

Housing Associations

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce in Scotland a special needs management allowance similar to that available in England and Wales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes is currently reviewing funding arrangements for housing associations in Scotland and I shall consider its proposals with care in due course. Any changes in revenue funding arangements are unlikely to be announced before the spring of 1992. Hostel deficit grant will continue to be available for eligible schemes until 1 April 1992.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was paid out in hostel deficit grant to housing associations in Scotland in the last five years for which figures are available; and how many units of accommodation were covered by hostel deficit grant in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table.

	Hostel deficit grant £	*Number of units*
1986-87	18,870	214
1987-88	28,125	209
1988-89	101,708	298
1989-90	184,279	292
1990-91	611,241	742

Sexual Offences

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reason statistics relating to sexual offences in Scotland are not collected centrally in a way which separately identifies such offences against children; if he will make it his policy in future to collect statistics in this way; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: While statistics on crimes collected centrally have generally not been classified by the characteristics of the victim of the crime, the Scottish Criminal Statistics Committee is currently examining the feasibility of collecting information for certain offences, including sexual offences, on whether the victim was a child or an adult.

Fire Services

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many fire appliances were in operation in Scotland as at 1 January 1980 and each succeeding year;

(2) how many full-time fire fighters were employed in Scotland as at 1 January 1980 and each succeeding year, indicating both the authorised and actual establishment figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information as at 31 December of each year, is as follows:

Scottish fire authorities: Full-time firefighters and appliances

Year	*Establishment*	*Actual strength*	*Fire appliances*[1]
1979	4,033	4,271	561
1980	4,359	4,300	560
1981	4,365	4,288	577
1982	4,373	4,279	577
1983	4,372	4,291	575
1984	4,375	4,270	592
1985	4,372	4,297	496
1986	4,379	4,296	509
1987	4,418	4,327	504
1988	4,475	4,408	509
1989	4,483	4,456	502
1990	4,486	4,439	504

[1] 1979-1984 figures include vehicles operated by volunteer fire crews; figures from 1985 onwards do not.

Renewable Energy Programmes

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how far the administrative and consultative arrangements for the 1991 review of renewable energy programmes have progressed in relation to Scottish interests.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy on 3 June 1991, at columns *8-9*.

Glenlochay Estate

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his assessment of the size and number of older estates in a similar position to Glenlochay, in relation to sites of special scientific interest and compensation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have asked the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland to advise me on this issue. I will then write to the hon. Member.

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made within the Scottish health service with competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards have made commendable progress. By the end of March, 226 contracts had been awarded and these are expected to release savings of more than £80 million over the periods of the contracts. These awards include nearly all the domestic, catering and portering services being provided in health boards throughout Scotland. The savings realised are available to boards for re-investment in direct patient care.

Boards have also extended competitive tendering into other service areas. Laundry/linen, grounds and gardens, estate maintenance and transport are just some of the services where contracts are being awarded. Some boards have, following competitive tendering, awarded contracts for the care of the elderly and for renal dialysis services. In all cases quality of delivery of service is of paramount importance in preparing tender specifications.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* central and *(b)* local Government expenditure, (i) capital and (ii) revenue, devoted to creating facilities for residential care of the profoundly mentally handicapped in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not held centrally.

Fishing (Payments)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will identify the destination of all payments made by the Secretary of State under section 5 of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such payments have been made.

Green Belt

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many acres of green belt zoned land in Scotland have been dezoned and used for building in each year since 1985;

(2) how many houses have been built in Scotland each year since 1985 on land which was changed from green belt zone status to allow building.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each available year from 1978 the amount invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1990-91 money terms.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 June 1991]:* Information in respect of the Scottish Office, but excluding the associated Departments and the Scottish prison service, is available for the following years:

	cash terms £	1990-91 money terms £
1987-88	150,000	184,730
1988-89	62,000	71,060
1989-90	100,000	107,750
1990-91	148,000	148,000

Disability

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to the Scottish tourist board concerning special provisions for disabled people.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* The Scottish tourist board has long recognised the special needs of the disabled and has actively encouraged the provision of adequate facilities in Scotland. The board was one of the national tourist authorities which collaborated with the holiday care service to produce in 1989 the report "Tourism for All" and is, at the Government's request, implementing a Scottish implementation strategy, which is now in its second year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tourism

14. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board to discuss tourism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I meet the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board regularly to discuss tourism matters and will continue to do so as required.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest unemployment figures for Northern Ireland; how many of those workers have been unemployed for a year or more; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: At 9 May, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 97,951 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland. This represents a fall of 1,059 over the previous month. Approximately 49,900 (50·9 per cent.) claimants have been unemployed for over one year.

Inward Investment

16. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the number of inward investment projects in Northern Ireland over the last two years.

Mr. Needham: During the last two years the Industrial Development Board has secured 27 inward investment projects for Northern Ireland, with the prospect of over 3,000 new jobs.

Higher Education

18. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to implement the White Paper "Higher Education: A New Framework in Northern Ireland," and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: As one of the joint signatories of the White Paper, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State fully supports the plans for the future of higher education set out therein and believes them to represent the best way forward for the entire United Kingdom. In determining the arrangements needed to reflect the new structures in Northern Ireland, he will wish to ensure that the Province's institutions retain the close cross-channel links and high quality standards that have enabled them to play their full part as members of the United Kingdom higher education community. At the same time, he will be seeking a strong and continuing local input to the decision-making process and will be considering what type of links with the new higher education funding councils will best secure these objectives.

Terrorism

19. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking against the financiers of terrorism.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have sought to include in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill measures which should help to ensure that the financiers of terrorism will not profit from their illegal activities. I am pleased to say that the measures have received wide support in this House and in another place.

20. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have died as a result of terrorist incidents since Thursday 2 May; and how many of these deaths were caused by *(a)* republican terrorists, *(b)* loyalist terrorists and *(c)* the security forces.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave earlier today to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux).

The Provisional IRA has claimed responsibility for seven of the murders. To date no organisation has claimed responsibility for the murder of one policeman and one soldier. Three men, apparently members of the Provisional IRA, were killed in an incident at Coagh involving members of the security forces.

Electricity Privatisation

21. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his reasons for deciding not to privatise Northern Ireland Electricity generation and distribution as a single entity.

Mr. Needham: I am anxious to inject as much competition as possible into the Northern Ireland electricity industry, as I believe competition will lead to benefits for consumers. It would be difficult to have fair competition for future generation if NIE also owned generating stations.

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens).

Rathlin (Roads)

22. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of the roads of Rathlin is hard surfaced.

Mr. Needham: Approximately 48 per cent. are hard surfaced with bitumen-bound stone.

Labour Statistics

23. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: At 9 May 1991, the latest date for which information is available, there were 97,951 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, representing 13·5 per cent. of the work force.

Sport

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money was spent on sport per capita in the Province in the past year and in 1978-79 at current prices; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Comprehensive records about how much money is spent on sport in Northern Ireland are not held centrally.

Grants paid on sport in Northern Ireland by Government per capita, for 1990-91 and 1978-79 at current prices are respectively £1·30 and £1·32 on recurrent items and £0·65 and £8·85 on capital projects. The reduction in capital expenditure reflects the fact that the provision of major leisure facilities across the Province has progressively been completed during the 1980s.

Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what observations he has received from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons concerning the use of strychnine as a poison for the control of foxes; and if he will take steps to prohibit such use.

Mr. Hanley: No observations have been received from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

The Department of Agriculture is, however, currently reviewing the use of strychnine for fox control, with a view to a possible ban.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those sites licensed for the disposal of hazardous, toxic and special wastes, respectively; what has been the cost of disposal of such wastes in Northern Ireland since 1979; and whether there are any plans to change the arrangements for handling such wastes in the future.

Mr. Needham: Licenses for the disposing of controlled wastes are issued by the district councils. The wastes include industrial wastes, certain of which may comprise substances in concentrations considered to be hazardous or toxic (defined as "special wastes"). Licenses which provide for depositing these types of waste have been issued for sites at Culmore, Londonderry and Dargan road, Belfast by the Derry and Belfast city councils respectively.

Details of the cost of disposing of hazardous, toxic and special wastes since 1979 are available only from the producers of such wastes.

In 1990 the Government published "A Review of Waste Disposal in Northern Ireland" commissioned from the waste management consultants, Aspinwall & Co. Ltd. The review suggests various options for waste management. Comments on the review have been received from the 26 district councils and other interested bodies, and the Government are now formulating a waste strategy for Northern Ireland which will be the subject of further public consultation this year.

Peace Initiative

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of his current peace initiative.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and to the statement that I made on 26 March 1991 at column *765-66* which set out the purpose and objective of the current talks process.

Advance Factories

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at what locations it is proposed to commence construction of advance factories in the next 12 months.

Mr. Needham: The Industrial Development Board has no plans to build any further advance factories in the next 12 months. The factory stock is considered adequate to meet demand in this period.

Fair Employment Commission

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer on 4 June, *Official Report*, column *196*, how many of the 27 Roman Catholic members of the staff of the Fair Employment Commission were civil servants prior to their employment by the Commission.

Mr. Needham: I understand that of the 27 Catholic members of the staff of the Fair Employment Commission none was a civil servant immediately prior to employment by the commission, but five had been in civil service employment earlier in their careers.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to meet the Taoiseach to discuss the Anglo Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I have no present plans for such a meeting. The current political talks will provide opportunities for discussion of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Population Statistics

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated population within each of the district council areas within the area of the Eastern health and social services board; and what was the population in each of these district council areas 10 years ago.

Mr. Hanley: The information, contained in the mid-year estimates of population, is:

District Council Area	*1990*[1]	*1981*
Ards	65,400	57,800
Belfast	295,100	315,300
Castlereagh	58,100	60,700
Down	57,700	53,600
Lisburn	98,700	84,900
North Down	72,600	66,700

[1] Figures for 1991 will not be available until mid-1992.

Sunday Trading

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has recently received about the law on Sunday trading.

Mr. Hanley: None, Sir.

Irish Sea

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's response to the report on the Irish sea from the environment education and culture committee of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary body.

Mr. Needham: The Government are at present considering the report and will be making its response in due course.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *454*, on flying over Caerwent, if he will outline the radius in nautical miles, and height restriction, within which military aircraft are required to take account of the potential hazard.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our practice to publish detailed information on flying restrictions in individual areas.

Helicopters

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the recent Royal Marine operations in northern Iraq in respect of the operational sufficiency of the number of Sea King helicopters available to the armed forces to fulfil simultaneously commitments in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade are to be congratulated on their achievements in providing relief and assistance to the Kurdish population in northern Iraq. They have been admirably supported by Royal Navy Sea King helicopters which continue to play an important part in this successful operation. Previously, Royal Navy Sea King helicopters were also able to make a substantial contribution during hostilities in the Gulf and they were, in addition, used in support of the recent relief operation in Bangladesh. This exceptional effort was due in no small part to the dedication and professionalism of our armed forces.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any scientists from the Blacknest verification centre attended the eighth thematic conference on geologic remote sensing in Denver, Colorado, on 29 April to 2 May in connection with their work on verification of a nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None attended.

Contracting Companies

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Department of Defense in the United States of America in relation to its policy on questioning contracting companies about senior executives' emoluments.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's latest discussions with Colin Wallace about compensation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the payment of £30,000 in September 1990, the Department has had no discussions with Mr. Wallace about compensation.

Territorial Army

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the future strength of the Territorial Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continue to attach the greatest importance to all our reserves and volunteer reserves. The Territorial Army will continue to have a key role to play. We shall be examining our requirements in this area, including the roles, size and organisation of TA units, in the light of the numbers we can expect to recruit and retain. Final decisions have yet to be taken.

Kuwait

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of Her Majesty's forces who have been contracted out to Royal Ordnance plc in respect of Kuwaiti minefield clearance operations have volunteered for the job; what will be the terms of compensation available in the event of injury or death; and if he will list the occasions on which members of Her Majesty's forces have been contracted out to a commercial company in circumstances where their safety and lives may be at risk.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The men of 21 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron are under military tasking and as such they were not required to volunteer. The squadron's task includes explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) which has been restricted by the MOD to exclude mine clearance, except where it is necessary for the squadron to gain access to specific and agreed EOD task locations. In the event of injury or death, the service men concerned will receive benefits payable by the Department of Social Security and by the Ministry of Defence under the terms of the war pensions scheme and the armed forces pension scheme respectively. The nature of this

deployment reflects the unique circumstances that existed in Kuwait following its liberation and the successful immediate post-hostilities work carried out by the Royal Engineers. I am not aware of any precise comparisons but, for example, RAF personnel seconded to British Aerospace served in Saudi Arabia throughout the Gulf war.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Disabled Staff

Mr. McMaster: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what percentage of the staff of the Palace of Westminster is registered as disabled; what is the target level; what measures are being taken to improve employment opportunities for disabled people within the Palace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith *[holding answer 10 June 1991]:* Of the staff employed by the House of Commons Commission, 0·6 per cent. are registered disabled.

The Commission's policy on the employment of disabled persons remains as set out in the Commission's annual report 1981-82. The Commission has appointed a disabled persons officer who is responsible for promulgating the Commission's policy on the employment of disabled people and for advising management and staff on matters concerning disablement. He keeps up to date with civil service policy on disablement and from time to time arranges seminars for departmental management with organisations concerned with disabled people.

Although not statutorily bound by the provisions of the Disabled Persons Acts 1944 and 1958, the Commission has nevertheless undertaken to accept the same responsibilities as other employers. This includes compliance with the requirement to employ a 3 per cent. quota of staff who are registered disabled.

Management has endeavoured to achieve the quota by encouraging applications from disabled people through recruitment literature and contacts with organisations dedicated to finding employment for the disabled. The implementation of this policy has recently been reviewed with the object of making it more effective. Consequently management have agreed, on the advice of the disabled persons officer, to adopt certain further measures. These will have the effect of ensuring that all applicants for vacancies in the House of Commons service who are registered disabled will be shortlisted for interview provided it is clear that their disabilities do not prevent them from satisfactorily carrying out the duties of the post and they have the qualifications asked for, if any. Disabled applicants who have not the required academic qualifications may take a short answer test. Where there are two candidates of equal merit, one of whom is disabled, the policy will continue to be to select the latter. Further measures are being considered.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his Department during the financial year 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

Mr. MacGregor: No video recordings have been purchased by the Department in the years mentioned.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the expenditure covered by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. MacGregor: The expenditure incurred by the Privy Council Office in respect of hospitality was as follows:

1989-90 £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92 to date* £
3,726·50	4,450·22	273·05

Recycled Paper

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *319*, what percentage of publications printed by Her Majesty's Stationery Office on behalf of the House of Commons is not of archival significance; and what are the reasons for not producing such material on recycled paper.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not possible to give an objective estimate of the percentage of publications considered to be of archival significance. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee is giving further consideration to the use of recycled paper for the Vote bundle, which could include a trial run by HMSO during the summer recess, and I would be prepared to ask it to carry out similar exercises for material which is clearly not of archival significance.

PRIME MINISTER

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the expenditure covered by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

The Prime Minister: This information is not available in the form requested. The cost of official hospitality met by my office during 1989-90 was £27,427; it is estimated to be £20,904 and in 1991-92 to date, it is £6,485.

Statistics

Mr. Soames: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to improve the quality, substance and accuracy of economic and commercial statistics available to Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: A comprehensive statement on the current state of official economic statistics was submitted by the Central Statistical Office to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on Wednesday 24 October 1990 —HC 671, Session 1989-90.

The memorandum gave details of an important package of measures to improve the reliability of economic data which the Central Statistical Office is now implementing. I announced this package to the House as Chancellor of the Exchequer on 17 May 1990, *Official Report*, column *172*. It is directed towards improving the quality of both the gross domestic product and the balance of payments estimates. In this context it has three major objectives:

(i) Reducing revisions to early estimates of both gross domestic product and the overseas current account by extending the range of quarterly sources;

(ii) Improving the accuracy and coherence of the measurement of gross domestic product through strengthening the weaker elements in the estimates;

(iii) Improving the accuracy and coherence of the financial accounts including the overseas or balance of payments accounts.

For details of the measures being undertaken, in order to achieve these aims, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) by the Economic Secretary on 13 May, *Official Report*, columns *19-21*. Further and more detailed information appeared in an article, titled "Improving Economic Statistics—The Chancellor's Initiative", in the February 1991 edition of "Economic Trends" which is available in the House of Commons Library.

The Government attach great importance to the need for reliable economic statistics and will consider further measures to maintain and improve the quality of economic data as the need arises.

Public Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which his Department was responsible for each of the past five years, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

The Prime Minister: This information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his Department during the financial year 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

The Prime Minister: No.

Ministerial Correspondence

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Prime Minister what action Departments have taken in response to the report of the efficiency scrutiny on ministerial correspondence; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The report of the efficiency scrutiny on ministerial correspondence was made available to Members of Parliament and others last December. The report, which provides recommendations of good practice, was accepted by the Government.

Departments have reacted very positively to the scrutiny report. Each Department has produced an action plan to implement those recommendations which they have accepted, and which are not already departmental practice. Each Department has nominated a Minister for correspondence issues.

Every Department accepted a majority of the scrutiny team's recommendations; overall 90 per cent. were accepted and none was generally rejected.

The report recognised that Members of Parliament always have the right to approach Ministers directly, but that a more efficient service could be achieved by decentralisation of correspondence on operational matters to agency chief executives and other discreet units or local offices. Departments have generally accepted these recommendations, and the most recent edition of the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" has been extended to provide information on agency chief executives and other key addresses.

The report identified the use of targets and monitoring of performance as important factors in improving the management of correspondence and all Departments agree with this. All Departments accept the recommendation that their own targets on correspondence should be published, and there has been widespread acceptance of the recommendation to send a prompt and informative interim reply where a departmental target will not be achieved. Departments also gave a strong support to the recommendations for monitoring annual publication of performance.

Departments are pursuing other recommendations, designed to improve the handling of correspondence, taking into account their differing functions and organisation.

In line with the normal procedures for an efficiency scrutiny, each Department will produce by July next year an implementation report to record the achievements in carrying through their action plan.

Minister for Ex-Service Men

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint a Minister with responsibility for ex-service men.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 12 June 1991]:* No. It would simply add another tier of administration to the present system as one Department could clearly not have

policy responsibility for all the matters of concern to ex-service men or their widows. Creating a new Department could lead only to unnecessary delay on inquiries since these would need to be referred to other Government Departments for consideration.

The Ministry of Defence is responsible for service pension matters, the Department of Health, through the NHS, for treatment of the disabilities of ex-service personnel and the Department of Social Security for war pension matters. The Department of Social Security administers the war pensioners' welfare service through a countryside network of offices. The service offers war disablement pensioners and war widows help and advice on personal problems and liaise on their behalf as necessary with statutory and voluntary bodies. War pensions committees also play an important part locally in matters relating to the welfare of war pensioners.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the current rates of child benefit if uprated in line with inflation since 1985.

Mr. Jack: The rate would be £9·55 per week for each child.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the chief adjudication officer's complaint, in his annual report for 1989-90, regarding the failure of presenting officers to attend social security appeal tribunal hearings.

Mr. Scott: The chief adjudication officer made no formal recommendation in his report about non-attendance by presenting officers at tribunal hearings and I have not made a response to him on this point.

The Benefits Agency makes every effort to ensure that a presenting officer attends every tribunal hearing. Non-attendance is not a widespread problem and existing liaison arrangements with the office of the president of social security appeal tribunals provide the opportunity to resolve any difficulties which may arise.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will arrange for information to be collected on the number of social security appeal tribunal hearings at which, and the reasons why, there is no presenting officer.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to collect such information.

Departmental Relocation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for the location of new jobs or relocation of existing jobs in his Department in Wales.

Mr. Scott: We have no current plans to locate new jobs or relocate existing jobs in Wales.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will consider raising cold weather payments made to senior citizens; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce automatic cold weather payments for all senior citizens, irrespective of income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: On 11 February I announced in the House that I would undertake a review of the operation of the cold weather payments scheme. I shall be making an announcement shortly.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will name the statutory instrument from which he derived his definition of full-time education as 12 hours or more of supervised study each week in the "Invalid Care Allowance Claim Pack," DS700 (1991).

Mr. Scott: Regulation 5 of the Social Security (Invalid Care Allowance) Regulations 1976, as amended, describes the circumstances in which people are to be regarded as receiving full-time education.

Local Offices

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to provide suitable benefit office facilities in the constituency of Darwen and Rossendale following the proposed closure of the Rossendale social security office.

Mr. Scott: We are presently conducting a service planning exercise to establish the needs of our customers throughout Rossendale. There are no plans either to close Rossendale social security office or to reduce the customer services currently being provided in the area.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pigs

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by his Department to ensure that blue-ear disease in pigs is kept out of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean *[pursuant to his reply, 25 April 1991, c. 554]: The history of blue-eared pig disease.* Blue-eared pig disease has been diagnosed in Germany, the Nertherlands, Belgium and Spain and it appears that a similar condition has occurred in North America in recent years. Experience on the mainland of Europe is that the disease lasts for four to eight weeks in affected herds. The symptoms are by no means consistent—only a few affected animals show blue ears, for example. The first signs may be high temperatures and pigs off their food. A mild influenza-like illness may be seen in all ages of pigs on the premises. Sometimes blue discolouration of extremities such as ears, teats, vulva and backs of legs occurs. A consistent feature of the disease is an increase in the level of abortions that would normally be expected and in still births in pregnant sows. Those piglets which survive show laboured breathing, diarrhoea and other symptoms and up

to 40 per cent. or more may die within the first two weeks of life. Deaths among adult pigs are very low and infected sows normally recover.

Spread of disease has been associated mainly with the movement of breeding pigs but airborne spread may also occur. The Dutch central veterinary institute announced recently that it had isolated a virus that causes the disease.

In the Community, the disease first occurred in Germany in November 1990, although it was not reported until 16 February. Since 1 March the Community rules on trade in pigs (which require that all pigs traded between member states should be subject to veterinary inspection and health certification) have been supplemented by additional measures and trade safeguards in response to the disease. These include a prohibition on the export to other member states of any pigs from infected holdings and of pigs for breeding or fattening from municipalities where disease is present or has recently occurred. In practice the United Kingdom does not import pigs from any of the infected countries.

Britain's precautionary action. Last year, the British Government took powers to restrict the movement of animals if a new disease was suspected, under the Movement of Animals (Restriction) Order 1990 as amended. These powers enabled us to be quicker in our reactions to any disease threat than previously, and indeed quicker than other members of the European Community.

Suspicious symptoms were first reported to the veterinary investigation service on 16 May. On investigation the symptoms appeared significantly different from those found elsewhere in Europe, but nevertheless precautionary restrictions were imposed on the premises concerned on 20 May. To date, 12 premises have been placed under restriction for the same reason, all in the Humberside area apart from one in county Durham.

The restrictions that have been imposed since suspicious symptoms first appeared are more stringent than those required by Community rules for the control of blue-eared pig disease and more stringent than those imposed in the Community countries where the disease is established. All movements of pigs off premises where disease is suspected are subject to licence by a veterinary inspector. No such movements have so far been licensed except for movements direct to a slaughterhouse. If severe overcrowding were to occur on a suspect farm, growing pigs might have to be moved off. Such movements would be only to a non-breeding farm already situated in an infected area and not situated adjacent to a breeding unit, and the receiving farm would be placed under restriction as soon as the movement took place.

In addition, farms in the areas surrounding those where disease is suspected have been put under restriction too. In these areas licences have been issued allowing movement of pigs direct to a slaughterhouse. The movement of growing pigs to fattening units in Humberside has also been licensed subject to there being no breeding stock on the receiving premises, nor any breeding unit adjoining the receiving premises.

Blue-eared pig disease confirmed. Yesterday evening (12 June), a Dutch veterinary laboratory using the only known diagnostic test sent us results which showed that blue-eared pig disease had indeed spread to the United Kingdom. The very early action that we have taken under our existing range of measures has meant that we already have in place restrictions which are significantly tougher than those employed on the continent. Now that we have a positive identification of the disease, these measures will be made specific under the Blue-Eared Pig Disease Order 1991, which I have already signed, and which came into force at 12.01 pm today. The new order will confirm measures we have already taken which enable movement restrictions to be imposed or maintained on infected premises and areas. In addition, the order

- enables movement restrictions to be imposed on premises which have received animals from premises where infection exists;
- lays down requirements about the destruction of infected material;
- lays down requirements about the cleansing and disinfection of premises.

Finally, the disease will now be notifiable, which clearly it could not have been until it was properly diagnosed by yesterday's results. As no test for the disease is generally available, and as a wide range of symptoms can occur, the Ministry will be publishing guidance to farmers and veterinary surgeons on the signs giving rise to suspicions.

Limiting the spread. All the steps we have taken were designed to limit the disease to the maximum extent possible. We have been in close touch with our Community partners who also have the disease, and they have co-operated fully with us. Even so, none of us have sufficient information to know fully how the disease is spread. We cannot guarantee therefore that any particular measure will be successful in preventing its communication. Nonetheless, it must be sensible to take those steps which are most likely to make a difference, and it would be irresponsible not to try to protect those areas of the country where it has not occurred, if at all possible. It seems clear that one factor which does lead to the spread of disease is the movement of breeding pigs. Following discussion with the pig industry I therefore intend to use the powers under the new order to define a large restricted zone. This will not be easy for the industry in the parts of the country which will be covered, but in discussions today their representatives have made it clear that they support the Government's determination to prevent the spread of disease. This zone will embrace all the infected farms in Humberside, and a wide area around them bounded by a line running roughly from Cleethorpes through Lincoln, Doncaster, York and Scarborough. The movement of pigs out of this zone will be permitted only when going direct for slaughter. Pigs from farms where infection is not suspected or confirmed may, however, move freely within the zone.

As I have already indicated, it is by no means certain that this measure will succeed in curtailing the disease. Our policy will therefore need to be kept under close review, in discussion with the industry.

Blue-eared pig disease has important economic effects upon individual producers, but it is exclusively an animal health problem and there are no implications for human health.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether pigs from areas of the United Kingdom which are not under movement restrictions are able to be exported to other EC and non-EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Provided that pigs meet the conditions of Directive 64/432 and the conditions set out in the appropriate Community decision 91/237 they can be exported to other member states. Commission decision 91/237 lays down conditions for breeding and production

pigs from farms and municipalities under restriction. Exports to non-EC countries would need to meet the conditions laid down by those countries.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the causes of blue-ear disease; and whether he has eliminated the possibilities of *(a)* a virus, *(b)* a bacteria and *(c)* chemical contamination;

(2) whether he will make blue-ear disease notifiable;

(3) what evidence he has on the means of transmission of blue-ear disease; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what inspections are carried out by his Ministry on the health of pigs which are imported and exported to and from the United Kingdom to ensure that they are free of blue-ear disease and other diseases; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information he has concerning the infectious nature of blue-ear disease; and if he will make a statement;

(6) on what date he first knew about the problems of blue-ear disease in pigs in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other EC countries; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what controls and regulations exist on the import and export of pigs between EC member states where blue-ear disease has been found; and if he will make a statement;

(8) how many man hours have been devoted by his Ministry to the investigation of the cause of blue-ear disease; and if he will make a statement;

(9) if he will list *(a)* the numbers of farmers and *(b)* the numbers of pigs under movement restrictions as a result of blue-ear disease to date on a county by county basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) earlier today.

Farm Budget

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the overall farm budget agreed for 1991-92 as a result of the new farm price package; and what was the actual common agricultural policy expenditure in this area last year.

Mr. Curry: Taking account of this year's price settlement, the European Commission is forecasting that Community expenditure on agricultural support in 1991 will exceed the budget of £22·0 billion but will fall within the agricultural guideline of £22·7 billion. A supplementary budget will be put forward in due course. For 1992 the budget has yet to be agreed but expenditure cannot exceed the agricultural guideline of £24·4 billion. The forecast outturn for Community agricultural guarantee expenditure in 1990 is £17·9 billion.

Simazine

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he envisages any restrictions being placed on the use of the herbicide Simazine; and whether its continued use has been considered by the appropriate European Community authorities.

Mr. Maclean: Simazine is not being considered by the European Community authorities but is under review in the United Kingdom. Any recommendations concerning the approval status on conditions of use of simazine made by the advisory committee on pesticides as a result of the review will be considered by the six Ministers responsible for pesticides.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to implement the recommendation of the Dunnet review and re-examine the Ministry's policy on badgers and bovine tuberculosis.

Mr. Maclean: We are already implementing the recommendations of the present interim badger control strategy which is firmly based on the recommendations of a committee chaired by Professor Dunnet. One of these was that the strategy should be reviewed if certain criteria were met three and five years after the strategy was implemented. In the event, the criteria were not met at the three-year point, and five years have not yet elapsed. Nevertheless in line with Professor Dunnet's recommendations, a test to detect tuberculosis in live badgers is undergoing field trials. The way in which such a test might be used is being considered with the assistance of the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Ministry's badger eradication programme.

Mr. Maclean: There is no badger eradication programme, and no such policy is justified. Small numbers of badgers are removed when implicated in a tuberculosis breakdown in cattle, as recommended by Professor Dunnet's independent review.

Animal Diseases

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many man hours were devoted to *(a)* BSE, *(b)* salmonella and *(c)* blue-ear disease at the Lincoln veterinary investigation centre on (i) 31 December and (ii) 31 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In the period 31 December 1990 to 31 May 1991, 398 man hours were devoted to BSE, 1,239 man-hours were devoted to salmonella and an estimated 100 man-hours were devoted to suspect blue-ear disease of pigs at the Lincoln veterinary investigation centre.

Megrim

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated catch of megrim in British coastal waters in each of the past five years.

Mr. Gummer: The information is not available in the form requested. Total landings of megrim into the United Kingdom by British vessels in each of the last five years were as follows:

1986	2,284 tonnes landed weight
1987	3,660 tonnes landed weight
1988	4,141 tonnes landed weight
1989	3,810 tonnes landed weight
1990	3,720 tonnes landed weight

Source: Annual Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables.

Whaling Conference

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the Governments which were present and entitled to vote at the recent international whaling conference at Reykjavik.

Mr. Curry: The countries are Australia, Brazil, Chile, the People's Republic of China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Seychelles, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the USSR, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. One country left the meeting early before certain votes had been taken or considered.

Quarantine

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the disease quarantine premises he has in the United Kingdom, giving the location in each case, and which animals they are approved for handling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Quarantine is required for three diseases. For foot and mouth there is one quarantine premise at Poole. For rabies there are a number of approved premises throughout the country. For Newcastle disease there are a number of privately owned approved premises. Lists of the premises currently approved for rabies and Newcastle disease are available from the Ministry and I will send a copy to the hon. Member.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 14 June, 1991

TRANSPORT

Tyres

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern the manufacture of re-mould tyres used on commercial vehicles.

Mr. Chope: The Motor Vehicle Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1984 require all re-mould tyres to comply with British Standard BS 144b: 1977.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern the use of re-mould tyres fitted to commercial vehicles.

Mr. Chope: There are no regulations which refer specifically to the use of re-mould tyres, but all tyres are required by the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 to be suitable for the use to which a vehicle is put.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving commercial vehicles were attributable to defective re-mould tyres during the years 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Chope: Statistics are not available for 1989 or 1990 on accidents attributable to failure of tyres on commercial vehicles. However, the Department is co-ordinating research into the incidence and causes of tyre failures among heavy goods vehicles on motorways.

Supplementary Grants

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much transport supplementary grant was made available to West Sussex county council for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Chope: Before 1985-86 transport supplementary grant was given for capital and current expenditure. Since then current expenditure has been subsumed in revenue support grant, so figures before 1985-86 are not comparable with later figures. Transport supplementary grant for the last 10 years has been:

Settlement year	*£ million*
1982-83	3·908
1983-84	3·475
1984-85	3·719
1985-86	3·241
1986-87	3·622
1987-88	3·089
1988-89	2·730
1989-90	1·526
1990-91	4·532
1991-92	4·126

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the Atkins report on the channel tunnel rail link and when he does so, if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail sent us a copy of the report yesterday. We shall study it alongside all the other material it has sent us. The report and other key documents will be published in due course when we are ready to announce our conclusion.

DVLA Information Technology Directorate

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's information technology directorate.

Mr. Chope: I have recently reviewed the status of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's directorate of information technology, known as DVOIT (Drivers, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology). This is a separate unit within the agency, comprising some 500 staff, which provides IT support to DVLA and to a number of other customers within the Department of Transport.

As a first step DVOIT will be established as a separate executive agency from next April. This will allow it to develop a more commercial style of operation and in particular to establish more formal contractual relationships with its customers. I hope this will pave the way for eventual privatisation in a few years' time.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Bromley and Kingston Education Authorities

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to introduce amending legislation in the light of the recent High Court decision concerning Bromley and Kingston education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend is aware of the recent court cases involving the school admissions policies of Bromley and Kingston education authorities. He will be looking at the pattern of school admissions this September before deciding whether legislation to amend the law on admissions would be appropriate.

Public Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which his Department was responsible for each of the past five years together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Eggar: Until June 1990 information on public appointments was not held centrally within the Department, but is available in "Public Bodies" which is published annually and gives details of all such appointments together with salary details. Current appointments together with salary details and the date when each appointment is due for renewal are as follows:

Name of body	Appointment and date of renewal	Salary
Business and Technician Education Council	Chairman and all 12 members in December 1992	Chairman part-time £10,000 Members part-time unpaid
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research	Chairman in 1993 3 members in 1991 4 members in 1992 3 members in 1993	All part-time unpaid
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges	Chairman in March 1994 4 members in August 1991 1 member in December 1991 4 members in August 1992 1 member in January 1993 2 members in December 1993	All part-time unpaid
Education Assets Board	Chairman and all 6 members in July 1992	Chairman part-time £20,515 Members £111 sessional fee.
National Council for Educational Technology	Chairman in March 1994 4 members in March 1992 5 members in March 1993 8 members in March 1994	All part-time unpaid
Council for National Academic Awards	Chairman in April 1994 25 members in September 1991	Chairman part-time £6,000 Members part-time unpaid
Further Education Unit Board of Management	Chairman in April 1993 11 members in December 1991	All part-time unpaid
Advisory Board for the Research Councils[1]	Chairman in March 1993 1 member in March 1992 2 members in March 1993 1 member in September 1993 2 members in March 1994 1 member in September 1995 1 member in December 1995	Chairman full-time £65,575 Members part-time £4,340 honorarium
Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education	Chairman in June 1993 9 members in December 1991 10 members in December 1992	Chairman £19,000 part-time Members part-time unpaid
Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils	Chairman and all 10 members in 1991	Chairman £4,100 honorarium Members part-time daily fee £65
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council	Chairman in November 1991 13 members in March 1992	Chairman part-time £14,000 Members part-time £2,300 honorarium
School Examinations and Assessment Council	Chairman and Chief[2] Executive in August 1993 5 members in August 1991 5 members in August 1992 2 members in August 1993 1 member in August 1994	Chief Executive £54,900 Members part-time unpaid
Sports Council	Chairman and Vice-chairman in May 1992 6 members in October 1991 1 member in November 1991 1 member in December 1991 1 member in November 1992 1 member in December 1992 2 members in March 1993 1 member in May 1993	Chairman part-time £17,362 Members part-time unpaid
United States/United Kingdom Educational Commission (Fulbright Commission)	2 members in December 1991 1 member in December 1992 2 members in December 1994	Members part-time unpaid

Name of body	*Appointment and date of renewal*	*Salary*
Universities Funding Council	Chairman in October 1991 8 members in March 1992 4 members in March 1994	Chairman part-time £14,000 Members part-time £2,300 honorarium
Agricultural and Food Research Council	Chairman in August 1995 Secretary in December 1995[3] 5 members in July 1991 3 members in July 1992 7 members in July 1994	Chairman part-time £11,580 Secretary £61,920 full-time Members part-time £4,340 honorarium
Economic and Social Research Council	Chairman in September 1992 4 members in July 1991 5 members in July 1992 5 members in July 1993 5 members in July 1994	Chairman full-time £59,020 Members part-time £4,340 honorarium
Medical Research Council	Chairman in September 1994 6 members in July 1991 3 members in July 1992 2 members in July 1993 4 members in July 1994	Chairman part-time £5,790 Members part-time honorarium £4,340
Natural Environment Research Council	Chairman in September 1993 6 members in July 1992 3 members in July 1993 6 members in July 1994	Chairman full-time £59,020 Members part-time £4,340 honorarium
National Curriculum Council	[2]Chairman and Chief Executive in August 1995 Deputy Chairman in August 1991 6 members in August 1991 4 members in August 1992 3 members in August 1993	Chief Executive full-time £69,120 Deputy Chairman and Members part-time unpaid
Science and Engineering Research Council	Chairman in September 1995 2 members in July 1992 8 members in July 1993 4 members in July 1994	Chairman full-time £76,600 Members part-time £4,240—£5,790 honorarium
[4]Inner London Staff Commission	Chairman and 2 members in April 1993	Chairman part-time minimum 5 day fee at £118 per day. Members part-time minimum 2·5 days at £102 per day.
Yehudi Menuhin School Governing Body	2 members in July 1991	Unpaid
Visiting Committee of Cranfield Institute of Technology	Chairman in September 1991 4 members in July 1991 2 members in November 1992 1 member in September 1993	All part-time unpaid
Visiting Committee of the Royal College of Art	Chairman in June 1991 1 member in June 1991 1 member in July 1991 1 member in June 1992 2 members in November 1992 1 member in March 1994	All part-time unpaid
The Staff College (FE) Staff College Governing Body	Chairman in November 1991 4 members in December 1991 4 members in December 1992 3 members in December 1993 3 members in December 1994	All part-time unpaid
Visiting Committee of the Open University	2 members in January 1992 3 members in January 1993 2 members in January 1994	Part-time unpaid
University Commissioners	Chairman in July 1991 4 members in July 1991	Chairman part-time £383 daily fee Members part-time £198 daily fee

Name of body	Appointment and date of renewal	Salary
Teaching as a Career Unit Board	Chairman in March 1993 Joint Secretaries in March 1993 8 Members in March 1993	All part-time unpaid
School Management Task Force	Leader in March 1992 5 members in March 1992	Leader and Members part-time paid[5]
National Youth Agency Management Committee	Chairman and 7 members in March 1994	All part-time unpaid

[1] Includes the heads of the 5 research councils, who are also listed under their respective councils.
[2] The present chairman is also chief executive. The post of chairman is unpaid.
[3] The secretary of AFRC is also deputy chairman.
[4] The work of the commission will be concluded in April 1993.
[5] The Department makes a contribution towards salary costs.

Schools (Budgetary Delegation)

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities which, in the most recent year for which information is available *(a)* had introduced full budgetary delegation to (i) all primary schools and (ii) all secondary schools and *(b)* had introduced school funding (i) fully in accordance with their published formula, (ii) partly in accordance with the formula and partly in accordance with historical principles and (iii) only in accordance with historical principles.

Mr. Fallon: The following table lists those local education authorities whose primary or secondary schools have full delegated management as of 1 April 1991.

With regard to formula funding, the vast majority of LEAs have taken advantage of the transitional arrangements which allow for the change from historic to pure formula funding to take place gradually in the period up to 1 April 1994.

The detailed information on each LEA is not immediately available. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

(1) Fully delegated budgets to primary schools by 1991-92

Westminster
Brent
Harrow
Hillingdon
Merton
Richmond
Coventry
Solihull
Bolton
Bradford
Kent

(2) Fully delegated budgets to secondary schools by 1991-92

Westminster
Barking
Barnet
Brent
Bromley
Croydon
Ealing
Haringey
Harrow
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Kingston
Merton
Redbridge
Richmond
Sutton
Coventry
Knowsley
Sefton
Wirral
Bolton
Manchester
Doncaster
Sheffield
Bradford
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cornwall
Cumbria
Devon
Dorset
Durham
East Sussex
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Lincolnshire
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Somerset
Suffolk
Surrey
Gateshead
South Tyneside
Isles of Scilly
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wiltshire

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list local education authorities from which a secondary school has *(a)* voted for and *(b)* achieved grant-maintained status showing what proportion of its secondary provision such schools represent.

Mr. Eggar: The table gives the number and proportion (in percentage terms) of secondary schools within a local education authority which have: (a) voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status; (b) voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status and been approved for GM status.

	(a)		*(b)*	
Local education authority	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Hammersmith	1	10	1	10
Kensington	1	20	1	20
Southwark	1	6	1	6
Tower Hamlets	1	7	1	7
Wandsworth	3	25	0	—
Barnet	2	9	2	9
Brent	3	20	1	7
Bromley	7	37	1	5
Croydon	1	4	0	—
Ealing	6	46	0	—
Hillingdon	10	56	4	22
Newham	1	7	1	7
Sutton	2	14	2	14
Waltham Forest	1	6	1	6
Birmingham	4	5	4	5
Dudley	2	8	1	4
Sandwell	1	4	1	4
Solihull	1	7	0	—
Wolverhampton	2	10	2	10
Bolton	1	6	1	6
Liverpool	1	3	1	3
Tameside	1	5	1	5
Wigan	1	4	0	—
Bradford	1	1	1	1
Calderdale	2	12	2	12
Kirklees	2	5	2	5
Avon	2	3	2	3
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1
Berkshire	4	7	3	5
Buckinghamshire	3	7	3	7
Cambridgeshire	1	2	0	—
Cheshire	1	1	1	1
Cumbria	4	9	1	2
Derbyshire	2	3	2	3
Devon	1	1	1	1
Dorset	5	8	2	3
Essex	5	5	2	2

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Local education authority	(a) Number	(a) Per cent.	(b) Number	(b) Per cent.
Gloucestershire	6	14	4	9
Hampshire	3	3	2	2
Hertfordshire	6	6	3	4
Kent	22	15	5	3
Lancashire	4	4	4	4
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1
Lincolnshire	12	19	7	11
Norfolk	6	11	1	2
Northamptonshire	5	8	3	5
Nottinghamshire	1	1	0	—
Shropshire	1	3	1	3
Somerset	1	3	1	3
Surrey	7	12	1	2
Warwickshire	3	8	1	3
Wiltshire	1	2	1	2
Total	167		85	

Notes:

(1) Column *(a)* lists the total number of schools in an authority which have voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained (GM) status. Some of these schools have yet to publish proposals, others have published proposals which Ministers will be considering soon or which they have already either approved or rejected.

(2) Column *(b)* lists the number of schools whose proposals have been approved. This includes schools which are already operating as GM schools and those which were approved for incorporation in September.

School Premises

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in England do not meet the requirements laid down in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not held centrally. It is the duty of LEAs and others directly responsible for schools to ensure that school premises conform to the standards prescribed in the regulations.

Higher Education (Salaries)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total number of teaching staff and the total salary bill, exclusive of the employers' insurance and superannuation contributions *(a)* for English universities, and *(b)* for polytechnics and colleges under the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council for 1984-85 and 1989-90.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information on the numbers of universities' teaching staff and salaries inclusive of employers' insurance and superannuation contributions is contained in the annual volume "University Statistics Volume Three—Finance" table 9 published by the universities' statistical record. The latest edition is for financial year 1988-89. Copies of this publication are in the Library.

Data on polytechnics and colleges are not available in the requested form.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what have been the annual grants made to Bangladesh by the Bangladesh Aid Consortium in each year since 1972; what has been the United Kingdom's contribution within the same period; and what have been the sums devoted by the Bangladesh Aid Consortium to programmes designed (i) to protect coastal areas from cyclone damage and (ii) to prevent flooding within Bangladesh.

Mrs. Chalker: Total net official development assistance to Bangladesh from all donors, and from the United Kingdom, is as follows:

Total Net Official Development Assistance from all donors	£ million	UK Net Bilateral Official Development Assistance	£ million
1972	89·45	1972	2·53
1973	171·98	1973	2·67
1974	208·09	1974	6·44
1975	430·47	1975	14·30
1976	288·49	1976	13·72
1977	334·41	1977	21·99
1978	501·06	1978	43·97
1979	533·61	1979	33·77
1980	512·96	1980	42·57
1981	494·45	1981	33·31
1982	766·20	1982	22·17
1983	691·51	1983	23·92
1984	898·30	1984	34·77
1985	888·37	1985	40·28
1986	992·11	1986	37·43
1987	998·12	1987	33·96
1988	893·8	1988	41·08
1989	1098·7	1989	51·96

In the period 1972-81 the figures for the donor group include DAC donors and multilateral institutions. From 1982 the totals also include assistance from Arab donors.

We do not maintain statistics on the sectoral breakdown of other donor countries' aid programmes and cannot therefore give details of financial support for cyclone protection and flood prevention.

British Council

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries, and the towns or cities in these countries, where Overseas Development Administration work is sub-contracted to the British Council.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA has engaged the British Council to act as its agent in providing certain services in 106 countries. These services are normally available in the main towns and cities of these countries, which are as follows:

Algeria
Angola
Anguilla
Antigua and Barbuda
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Benin
Bhutan
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Mali
Malta
Mauritania
Mauritius

AVAILABLE

Bolivia
Botswana
Brazil
British Virgin Islands
Burkino Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Cote d'Ivoire
Cyprus
Djibouti
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Equador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Falkland Islands
Fiji
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Gibraltar
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Jamaica
Jordan
Kenya
Kiribati
Lesotho
Mexico
Montserrat
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Nepal
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Republic of Yemen
Rwanda
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
St. Helena and Tristan Da Cunha
St. Kitts/Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Sudan
Swaziland
Tanzania
Thailand
Togo
Tonga
Tunisia
Turkey
Turks and Caicos Islands
Tuvalu
Uganda
Vanuatu
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe

HEALTH

Dental Health

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the water supply in England and Wales is now fluoridated artificially; and what is his policy for ensuring the optimum level of fluoridation in the interests of securing better dental health.

Mr. Dorrell: Some 12 per cent. of the population in England and Wales receive water where the fluoride content has been artificially increased. It is for health authorities to decide whether or not to ask water authorities to increase local fluoride levels. Where arrangements are made the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985 requires that they should include provisions to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, the concentration of fluoride is maintained at 1 milligram per litre which is the optimal level for reducing dental caries.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy for improving the dental health of children in the ethnic minitory communities; what specific steps he is taking to ensure that children receive regular dental examinations and treatment and are encouraged to use toothpaste containing fluoride; what specific resources are being devoted by regional and district health authorities to implement any such programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: It is the responsibility of district health authorities to monitor the dental health of all age and ethnic groups in the population, to provide dental health education and preventive programmes and to screen the teeth of children in state-funded schools at least three times in each child's school life. Any advice on oral hygiene would include a description of the benefits of regular brushing of teeth and the use of toothpastes, the majority of which now contain fluoride.

To meet these objectives district health authorities through the community dental services will need to monitor levels of dental health throughout the population, to identify special needs, to encourage the use of the general dental service and to provide a safety net service of treatment for those whose needs cannot be met in the general dental service.

The resources devoted by any particular regional or district health authority to any programme will be a matter for the authority concerned; there will inevitably be variations between regions and districts reflecting the differences in the dental health of the population.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in tabular form details of the average number of decayed, missing or filled permanent teeth in 12-year-old children in England in each district health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: The most recent dental caries prevalence surveys by health districts of 12-year-old children were carried out during 1988-89. Not all health districts were represented in the surveys, which were co-ordinated by the British Association for Community Dentistry (BASCD). The average number of decayed, missing or filled permanent teeth (DMFT) in each district surveyed is shown in the table.

Table: Survey of 12-year-old children by health district 1988-89

District	*DMFT*
Burnley et al	3·09
Tameside and Glossop	2·73
St. Helens and Knowsley	2·70
Salford	2·69
Oldham	2·63
Central Manchester	2·60
North Manchester	2·49
Blackburn et al	2·21
Lancaster	2·16
Pontefract	2·14
Liverpool	2·14
Wigan	2·11
Airedale	2·09
Bolton	2·03
Blackpool et al	2·03
Bury	2·02
Barnsley	2·02
Halton	2·01
South Sefton	1·98
York	1·96
Sheffield	1·95
Cornwall	1·93
Trafford	1·92
Leeds Eastern	1·92
Ealing	1·88
Preston	1·87
Exeter	1·86
South Cumbria	1·82
Bradford	1·81
South Tees	1·80
West Lancashire	1·79
Wirral	1·77
Rotherham	1·77
Chester	1·77

District	DMFT
Leeds Western	1·74
South Manchester	1·73
North Staffordshire	1·72
Stockport	1·71
Sandwell	1·71
Hounslow and Spelthorne	1·71
Walsall	1·69
Richmond and Twickenham	1·69
Wakefield	1·65
Plymouth	1·64
North Tees	1·64
Macclesfield	1·64
North Derbyshire	1·62
Chorley and South Ribble	1·59
Wolverhampton	1·58
Nottingham	1·58
Northumberland	1·55
Rochdale	1·54
East Cumbria	1·53
Swindon	1·52
Bassetlaw	1·52
Leicestershire	1·52
West Berkshire	1·51
Scarborough	1·50
Herefordshire	1·48
Hillingdon	1·47
Mid Staffordshire	1·46
Central Nottinghamshire	1·43
East Berkshire	1·43
Cheltenham and Gloucester	1·42
Basildon and Thurrock	1·41
Crewe	1·40
Mid Surrey	1·40
Torbay	1·39
Darlington	1·39
South Tyneside	1·38
East Yorkshire	1·38
Durham	1·38
South Derbyshire	1·37
South West Durham	1·36
North West Surrey	1·35
Winchester	1·34
Dudley	1·34
Somerset	1·33
West Cumbria	1·32
Tower Hamlets	1·32
North West Durham	1·32
Coventry	1·32
West Dorset	1·31
Hull	1·31
Sunderland	1·30
Aylesbury Vale	1·29
Avon	1·29
Harrow	1·28
Merton and Sutton	1·28
Huddersfield	1·28
Islington	1·27
Warrington	1·26
South Lincolnshire	1·26
North Tyneside	1·25
Bath	1·25
Wandsworth	1·25
East Surrey	1·24
Calderdale	1·24
North West Hertfordshire	1·23
Hampstead	1·23
Scunthorpe	1·22
Newcastle	1·22
Northampton	1·21
Medway	1·20
East Birmingham	1·20
Shropshire	1·19
South West Surrey	1·19
Newham	1·19
North Warwickshire	1·19
Kidderminster	1·17
East Dorset	1·17
Southampton	1·16
South East Staffordshire	1·16
Kettering	1·16
Worcester	1·16
South Bedfordshire	1·15
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	1·14
Bloomsbury	1·13
Salisbury	1·11
Milton Keynes	1·11
Central Birmingham	1·11
Portsmouth	1·09
Camberwell	1·06
North Lincolnshire	1·06
North Hertfordshire	1·05
Grimsby	1·04
West Birmingham	1·03
Wycombe	1·01
Barking et al	1·01
Isle of Wight	0·99
Northallerton	0·98
Croydon	0·97
Bromsgrove and Redditch	0·97
South Warwickshire	0·95
North Birmingham	0·94
Harrogate	0·94
Solihull	0·93
Barnet	0·93
East Hertfordshire	0·92
Gateshead	0·91
South Birmingham	0·89
Rugby	0·88
West Essex	0·82
North Bedfordshire	0·71
Hartlepool	0·71

Training

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the amounts allocated in England by each regional health authority in 1991-92 for *(a)* the training of managers in the national health service, *(b)* postgraduate medical education and *(c)* continuing medical education.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not at present held centrally. Separate budgets for postgraduate and continuing medical education will operate for the first time this year.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will review the current policies of social services departments regarding the upper age limits for prospective inter-country adoptive parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no policy which places an upper age limit on prospective adoptive parents.

Age is one of many factors considered by social services departments in each case before making their recommendation about the suitability of people to become adoptive parents.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what security grading is given to establishments in England and Wales providing secure accommodation for juvenile offenders in care; and if he will publish details of those which have the highest rating;

(2) if he will publish in tabular form a list of establishments in England and Wales providing secure accommodation for juvenile offenders in care together with the number of beds in each establishment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Secure accommodation provided by local authorities in community homes is for all children in care, both offenders and non-offenders. All such establishments are required to comply with the Department's design guidance in terms of safety and security.

Details of all local authority-provided secure units as at 31 March 1991 are given in the table.

The same standards are applied administratively to the two youth treatment centres directly provided by the Department. The two youth treatment centres are at St. Charles, Brentwood (30 secure beds) and Glenthorne, Birmingham (30 secure beds).

Information about secure accommodation in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Secure accommodation by social service inspectorate regions 31 March 1991

Regions	*Location*	*Local authorities*	*Number of places*[1]
Northern	New Aycliffe (Royston House)	Durham	14M
	Aycliffe Special Unit	Durham	36M
	Netherton Park	Northumberland	5M
Yorkshire and Humberside	Kepples View	Rotherham	4M
	East Moor	Leeds	9B
	East Moor	Leeds	18B
North Western	Red Sands	Cheshire	6M
	Red Bank (Vardy House)	Lancashire	4B
	Red Bank Special Unit	Lancashire	26B
	Blackbrook House	Liverpool	5G
	Briars Hey (Orchard House)	Lancashire	8G
	Dyson Hall	Liverpool	8B
	Barton Moss (Park House)	Salford	7B
West Midland	Stoke House	Coventry	8M
	St Johns	Birmingham	4M
East Midlands	Moorfield	Derby	2M
	Kesteven	Lincoln	4M
	Greenacres	Derby	5M
Thames/Anglia	Salters	Cambridgeshire	6G
	Woodside Young People's Centre	Hertfordshire	2M
	Thornbury House	Oxfordshire	3B
	Brookside	Berkshire	4M
London	Middlesex Lodge	Hillingdon	9G
	Little Heath Lodge	Newham	6B
	Orchard Lodge	Southwark	8B
	Frant Court	Greenwich	3G
	Stamford House	Hammersmith	16B
Southern	Landsdowne	East Sussex	5M
	Beechfield	West Sussex	6M
	Fairfield	Hampshire	3G
	Glen House	Hampshire	8B
South Western	Atkinson Unit	Devon	12M
	Kingswood	Avon	20B

Note:
[1] G = Girls; B = Boys; M = Mixed Sex.

Correspondence

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he can expect to receive a reply to his letter of 31 January to the Under-Secretary of State about proposed charges by the Public Health Laboratory Service.

Mr. Dorrell: Unfortunately the original correspondence went astray. I wrote to the hon. Member with a full reply including an apology for the delay yesterday.

Disabled Clothing Workshops

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he received the report on disabled clothing workshops from Ms. Sally Guttrie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The report was received by the Department on 31 May. We expect to respond later in the summer.

Mile End Hospital

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations he has had about the proposed use of wards in the Mile End hospital by a private drug company; and if he will ensure that no decision will be made before the current consultation on the future of the hospital has been completed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Any decision will be a matter for the trust; the trust has given an assurance that under no circumstances would it undertake any agreement which would prejudice its services to patients.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date NHS trusts were required to submit their business plans to the NHS management executive; and how many trusts submitted their plans by the date.

Mr. Waldegrave *[pursuant to his reply, 11 June 1991, c. 490]:* I regret that the number of business plans quoted as having been submitted to the NHS management executive by 8 March 1991 was incorrect. Four NHS trusts submitted their plans by this date and a further nine by 11 March.

PRIME MINISTER

Japanese Cars

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Prime Minister if he will oppose the views expressed in the European Parliament that Japanese marque cars should be subject to a quota whether imported into the European Community or manufactured within its borders; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Cars manufactured in the European Community are European whatever the nationality of the manufacturer. I strongly oppose any attempt to restrict the circulation of such cars within the Community, for example, by incorporating them in a single quota with imports from Japan as suggested in the European Parliament debate. The Government's position on this question has been made quite clear to the EC Commission.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* males and *(b)* females who are serving sentences on conviction of murder under the age of (i) 14 years, (ii) 16 years and (iii) 18 years in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: The numbers of young people in those age groups serving sentences for murder on 31 May this year were as follows:

	Males	*Females*
Aged under 14	0	0
Aged under 16	1	0
Aged under 18	[1]4	0

[1] Excluding the one under 16.

Hospitality

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the expenditure by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial year *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following is the information about my Department's expenditure on hospitality:

Year	*£*
1989-90	28,630
1990-91	[2]29,447
[1]1991-92	6,665

[1] To 12 June.
[2] Provisional figure.

Bail

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make an estimate of the number of offences committed in the Metropolitan police area during the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available by persons after they have been released on bail either by the courts or by the police.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 30/90 "Reasons for refusing unconditional bail January to February 1989" estimates that 19 per cent. of those remanded in custody had previously reoffended on bail. A copy of this bulletin is in the Library.

Interpol

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what constraints the Data Protection Act 1984 imposes on information about convictions sustained by British citizens being passed to Interpol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The police national computer is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act. Under these provisions, information on convictions held on the PNC may be disclosed to member countries of Interpol for policing purposes.

Refugees

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for political refugee status there have been in each year and from which countries of birth since 1980; how many were admitted in each year; how many rejected and how many left the country; and how long it took to process each application on average.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on asylum applications and decisions, by nationality, is contained in tables 2-5 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 22/90 "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom 1989", and in the provisional estimates for 1990 provided to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 22 April. Copies of both these documents are in the Library of the House. The 1990 estimates are likely to understate because of delays in recording. Information on the average length of time between the receipt of an application and the decision, for total decisions in each of the years 1983-90, is given in the

table. A reliable analysis of this information by nationality, and corresponding data for 1980-82, are not available.

Estimated average length of time between the receipt of an application for refugee status or asylum, and the decision, for cases decided in the years 1983-90.[1]

Years in which decision made	*Months*
1983	6
1984	8½
1985	12½
1986	14
1987	14
1988	17
1989	12
[2]1990	12

[1] Excludes south-east Asian refugees given settlement on arrival.
[2] Provisional.

Prisoners (Northern Ireland Conflict)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the figures for each year since 1980 of the numbers of prisoners convicted in England and Wales for offences arising out of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prisoners serving sentences in Britain for offences arising out of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Mrs. Rumbold: Readily available information on the number of prisoners in England and Wales whose offences were related to terrorism in the quoted context is limited to those classified as category A. Thirty-eight such prisoners were in custody on 7 June 1991.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the number of requests by prisoners for permanent transfer to Northern Ireland and the outcome of these requests in each year since 1985; and whether these requests came from loyalists, republicans or prisoners whose offences were unconnected to the Northern Ireland conflict;

(2) what are the figures for each year since 1985 of the number of requests by prisoners for transfer to Northern Ireland for accumulated visits and the outcome of these requests; and whether these requests came from loyalists, republicans or prisoners whose offences were unconnected to the Northern Ireland conflict;

(3) what are the figures of the number of requests by prisoners for transfer to Northern Ireland which he notified to the Northern Ireland Office in each year since 1980 broken down on the basis of permanent and temporary transfers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is not kept on the political background of inmates seeking transfers to Northern Ireland. The other information requested is given in the tables.

Table A

	Permanent transfers to Northern Ireland[1]					
	Number Requests	*Number Transferred*	*Number Refused*	*Withdrawn*	*Outstanding*	*Others*[2]
1985	35	3	23	2	—	—
1986	17	2	17	1	—	—
1987	7	3	5	1	—	—
1988	56	6	33	1	—	2
1989	55	15	40	3	—	1
1990	59	3	36	6	24	2
1991 (to 31 May)	31	—	18	2	11	—
Totals	260	32	172	16	35	5

Table B

	Temporary transfers to Northern Ireland[1]					
	Number Requests	*Number Transferred*	*Number Refused*	*Withdrawn*	*Outstanding*	*Others*[2]
1985	11	1	7	1	—	—
1986	4	1	3	1	—	—
1987	6	2	2	—	—	—
1988	19	7	7	2	—	—
1989	18	2	15	—	—	2
1990	26	12	6	—	11	2
1991 (to 31 May)	11	—	2	—	9	—
Totals	95	25	42	4	20	4

[1] Requests made in any given year may have been decided in a later year.
[2] Includes requests where inmates have been released on appeal or on parole etc. before a decision was reached on the transfer request.

Table C
Number of requests referred to the Northern Ireland Office[3]

	Permanent transfer	*Temporary transfer*
1980	2	2
1981	6	2
1982	1	2
1983	6	4
1984	3	3
1985	6	6
1986	2	—
1987	14	6
1988	17	10
1989	24	2

	Permanent transfer	Temporary transfer
1990	28	11
1991 (to 31 May)	12	8

[3] Referrals made in any given year may include requests made in previous years.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether requests by prisoners from Northern Ireland for permanent transfer are initially processed by the prison governor and may be rejected at this stage;

(2) whether requests by prisoners from Northern Ireland for temporary transfer to take advantage of accumulated visits are initially processed by the prison governor and may be rejected at this stage.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. All such requests are referred to prison service headquarters for consideration.

Trespass

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision exists for compensating landowners who incur costs in obtaining repossession orders against trespassers.

Mr. John Patten: It is open to a landowner who incurs costs in obtaining a repossession order against a trespasser to apply to the court for an order for costs against the trespasser.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Avon and Somerset constabulary on enforcing section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 to deal with unlawful occupation of land by travellers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is entirely an operational matter for the police to decide, in the light of all the circumstances, whether or not to exercise the powers available to them under section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced on 22 May at columns 487-88 that guidance on the use of section 39 had been issued to the police. A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about trespassers at Charmy Down, near Bath and other sites in the area.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the adequacy of funding for police forces to apply section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The basis on which police forces are funded is set out in the Police Act 1964. There are no special provisions for funding police action under section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he received representations from the Welsh Language Board on the difficulties experienced by the family of the late Mrs. Mair Irene Davies in having the inquest proceedings conducted in Welsh; on what date he sent a substantive reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Representations from the Welsh Language Board about the inquest into the death of Mrs. Mair Irene Davies were first received on 31 October 1990. Following consultations with the coroner concerned, a substantive reply was sent on 28 January 1991. Further correspondence from the board was received on 6 February, which was again passed on to the coroner concerned for comments. We hope to reply shortly.

Animal Experiments

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what review he has undertaken of the provisions affecting the number of non-human primates used as laboratory animals which are kept in single cages in isolation from their fellows; and whether there are any proposals to phase out such housing;

(2) how many project licences have been granted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 which would necessitate the keeping of primates in isolation;

(3) what information is collected on the number of designated places under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 involving the use of larger primates in the United Kingdom which provide any kind of environmental enrichment; and what proportion of the total this number represents.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* Statistics on the housing of non-human primates are not routinely collected centrally, although the Home Office inspectorate carried out a special survey of large non-human holding facilities in 1988. A further review of establishments using larger primates is planned for next year and one of its aims will be to examine progress made in improving facilities since the 1988 review.

The special needs of non-human primates are recognised in the Home Office "Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Animals used in Scientific Procedures", HC107, published in 1989, which was based closely upon guidelines drawn up by the Royal Society and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. Paragraphs 3.43 to 3.59 of the code set out the general considerations which should be taken into account for housing non-human primates. Chapter 5 of the code gives details of the recommended cage dimensions for non-human primates.

As the code makes clear, non-human primates should be housed so that they have the opportunity for social interaction. Single housing, which may allow animals such interaction through seeing and hearing one another but without physical contact, is not the preferred option but may be necessary in some cases for animal welfare or scientific reasons. We are aware of no current project licences which require the housing of non-human primates in isolation away from the sight and sound of other animals of the same species.

Since the code was published there has been a marked improvement in the standard of facilities for non-human primates in designated establishments. There has also been an encouraging increase in awareness within establishments of the desirability of providing environmental enrichment. Home Office inspectors continue to pay

particular attention to the way in which non-human primates are housed and cared for. They will continue to monitor the progress being made by establishments in upgrading their non-human primate facilities to the standards set out in the code and encourage the provision of environmental enrichment.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Booklets

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his Department's benefit booklets to ensure that if receipt of a benefit is dependent on entitlement to another benefit this is made explicit.

Miss Widdecombe: It is the Department's policy to make this interdependance clear whenever possible in our leaflets. However, leaflets cannot cover every possible combination of circumstances without loss of clarity.

We will of course continue to check new or revised editions of leaflets to ensure that they explain the connection between benefits. If the hon. Member has a particular booklet in mind, I would be happy to look at it.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for rounding the retirement pension to the nearest 5p and the war disablement pension to the nearest 10p.

Miss Widdecombe: Rounding is done for administrative simplicity. In any one year an individual beneficiary may gain or lose very marginally, but even this effect will tend to balance out in the longer term. Disablement awards are expressed in mutliples of 10 per cent. Rounding the 100 per cent. pension to 10p ensures that individual awards are whole numbers of pence.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the amount by which the retirement pension has been rounded up or down in each year from November 1979 to April 1991.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is provided in the table. Figures relate to the single rate of basic retirement pension. Roundings are in pence rounded to one place of decimals.

Uprating Date	*Amount of Rounding*
November 1979	down 0·3p
November 1980	up 0·6p
November 1981	up 0·7p
November 1982	down 0·6p
November 1983	down 1·5p
November 1984	up 1·3p
November 1985	down 0·6p
July 1986	down 2·1p
April 1987	down 1·3p
April 1988	down 0·9p
April 1989	up 2·2p
April 1990	down 1·3p
April 1991	down 1·2p

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average weekly income for *(a)* single pensioners, *(b)* pensioner couples and *(c)* all pensioners, for 1988 and for 1990; and what was the cash and percentage change in income (i) 1979-1988 and (ii) since 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not currently available. The most recent data available from the "Family Expenditure Survey" show that in 1987 the average net weekly income for single pensioners was £75·10 and for pensioner couples was £140·70. Single pensioners' net weekly income increased by 30 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1987 and for pensioner couples the increase was 31 per cent.

Water Metering

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the effect of the water metering trials on people on benefit and on low-income households.

Miss Widdecombe: The water metering trials are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I understand that the final report upon them will not be available until their completion at the end of 1993. Nevertheless, some information will become available in 1992, as a result of the survey into the impact of water metering announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside on 30 April.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he has any plans to make an additional winter payment to all pensioners throughout the winter months from October to March;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that elderly people can meet the costs for heating their homes;

(3) whether he has sought the views of pensioner forums and other pensioner organisations in making his review of the cold weather payments;

(4) what plans he has to raise the current £6 per week cold weather payment;

(5) whether he will extend entitlement to cold weather payments to all pensioners, including those with incomes above the income support level; and whether he will change the cold weather payment system to make automatic payments without any need to claim;

(6) if he will express the value of the cold weather payment as a percentage of its real terms value when the payments were first introduced;

(7) what representations he has received on the current level of cold weather payments;

(8) if he will extend entitlement to cold weather payments to all pensioners, including those with incomes above the income support level;

(9) if he will change the cold weather payment system to make automatic payments without any need to claim.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him earlier today. I have received representations from a number of organisations, including Age Concern. There was no standard amount payable for extreme cold weather when payments were first introduced.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Security what progress he is making in his review of the cold weather payments system.

Mr. Scott: Following my review of the cold weather payments scheme, I now propose some significant enhancements to the scheme.

The cold weather payments scheme provides additional payments to help vulnerable people with their extra costs of heating in periods of very cold weather and we have already introduced significant improvements to the scheme including a standard payment on a regulated basis; raising the trigger temperature from −1·5°C to 0°C for all regions, and for any consecutive seven days; extending entitlement to households on income support with a child under five or a person over 60 or a disabled person; doubling of the capital limit for the elderly from £500 to £1,000; and increasing the weekly payment from £5 to £6.

These major improvements have increased the numbers eligible to 2·2 million and have also increased the cash amount and the frequency with which it becomes payable.

The substantial improvements I am now proposing are as follows:

First, we will abolish the present special capital rule governing eligibility for these payments. The £1,000 limit for those over 60 (£500 for others) will be abolished. All will be covered by the £3,000 rule which applies generally for income support. We estimate that the numbers eligible will, as a result of this measure, rise from about 2·2 million to about 2·6 million.

Secondly, in future, payments will be made automatically to all those who are eligible. The abolition of the special capital rule will enable us to do that. Subject to consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee, I shall lay regulations abolishing the need for people to make a separate claim. The information already available about people on income support will identify those eligible, and they will then be paid automatically.

Thirdly, I propose to assure eligible people that if very cold weather arrives, they can turn up their heating. The Meteorological Office can now supply daily a forecast for each of the weather stations which we use which will indicate, with sufficient accuracy, the likely average temperature over the next seven days. Accordingly I propose to introduce a new regulation to provide for payments to be made for a seven-day period if the forecast for the local weather station shows that the temperature is likely to average 0°C or below.

This will be an enhancement, not a replacement, of the existing scheme. If there is no such forecast, but nevertheless 0°C or below is subsequently recorded for a seven-day period, payments will still be made.

Finally, I propose to make regulations further refining the ways in which the weather stations are linked to individual areas, details of which will be announced before the recess.

Corresponding changes will also be proposed for cold weather payments in Northern Ireland.

Community Care Grants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total community care grants paid for *(a)* the north Tees area and *(b)* the south Tees area in (i) 1990-91 and (ii) 1991-92; what is the percentage change in each case; and what undertakings he has given on the minimum levels of increase in these grants.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on community care grants in 1990-91 was £435,998 in north Tees and £760,975 in south Tees. Expenditure in 1991-92 will not be known until the year is over.

Notes explaining the basis on which social fund allocations were made for each year from 1988-89 to 1991-92 have been placed in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research he has commissioned into the adequacy of income support to meet the basic living costs when deductions are being made.

Miss Widdecombe: We have commissioned no such research, but there are limits on deductions for arrears and some deductions are to cover current expenditure.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will show the effects of reducing the community charge benefit taper to *(a)* 12·5 per cent., *(b)* 10 per cent., *(c)* 8 per cent., *(d)* 6 per cent., and *(e)* 5 per cent., by showing for each of these tapers the cost at 1990-91 prices of paying community charge benefit to each of the following categories of income units, showing for each category how many income units he estimates would receive community charge benefit (i) all income units, (ii) single people over pensionable age, (iii) pensioner couples, (iv) single people with dependent children, (v) single people without dependent children, (vi) a married or cohabiting couple without dependent children, (vii) a married or cohabiting couple with dependent children, and (viii) any income units not included in the categories above.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 13 June 1991]:* The information requested is in the tables.

Estimated community charge benefit caseload and expenditure with various levels of the community charge benefit taper

(1991-92 benefit levels with expenditure estimates revalued to 1990-91 prices)

	Total cost £ million	*Caseload number*
15 per cent. benefit taper		
Single pensioners	360	2,160,000
Pensioner couples	220	870,000
Lone parents	140	740,000
Single, no children	290	1,700,000
Couple, no children	70	270,000
Couple with children	180	540,000
TOTAL	1,260	6,270,000
12·5 per cent. benefit taper		
Single pensioners	380	2,180,000
Pensioner couples	240	900,000
Lone parents	140	740,000
Single, no children	300	1,710,000
Couple, no children	80	270,000
Couple with children	190	560,000
TOTAL	1,330	6,360,000
10 per cent benefit taper		
Single pensioners	390	2,220,000
Pensioner couples	270	950,000
Lone parents	140	750,000
Single no children	310	1,740,000
Couple no children	80	290,000

	Total cost £ million	Caseload number
Couple with children	200	600,000
Total	1,410	6,550,000
8 per cent benefit taper		
Single pensioners	410	2,270,000
Pensioner couples	300	1,010,000
Lone parents	150	770,000
Single no children	320	1,800,000
Couple no children	90	310,000
Couple with children	230	670,000
Total	1,490	6,830,000
6 per cent. benefit taper		
Single pensioners	430	2,340,000
Pensioner couples	330	1,090,000
Lone parents	150	800,000
Single no children	340	1,920,000
Couple no children	100	360,000
Couple with children	270	840,000
Total	1,630	7,350,000
5 per cent. benefit taper		
Single pensioners	440	2,380,000
Pensioner couples	360	1,150,000
Lone parents	160	810,000
Single no children	360	2,050,000
Couple no children	120	410,000
Couple with children	310	1,000,000
Total	1,750	7,800,000

Notes:

(1) Information is derived from benefit levels on a 1991-92 basis but expenditure estimates have been revalued to 1990-91 prices.

Estimates also take account of the Community Charge Reductions scheme for 1991-92 and the general reduction of £140 in Community Charge levels.

Source:

Modelled using data drawn from the 1986/7/8 Family Expenditure Surveys.

The definition of "pensioner" is in line with that used by the income related benefits.

Caseload figures include benefit units, and count benefit cases for couples as one.

Retired People

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest year-on-year estimate for the number of people who are retired before the state retirement age as a result of invalidity.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 6 June 1991]:* Information is not available on the number of people who retire early on grounds of invalidity.

However, the table shows the number of people receiving invalidity benefit on 31 March 1990 who at the time were within five years of state retirement age.

Age	Men thousands	Age	Women thousands
60	43·2	55	12·1
61	49·2	56	13·5
62	50·7	57	13·8
63	56·9	58	13·8
64	66·2	59	14·2

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which his Department was responsible for each of the past five years together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Details of the public appointments for which my Department is responsible together with salary details and when these appointments are due for renewal are contained in the publications "Public Bodies" and "Public Appointments: a Handbook for Women's Organisations" which are published annually. Copies of both publications are in the Library of the House of Commons.

Government Employees (Sickness)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many days were lost through sickness among central Government employees in the last year for which figures are available; and what is the number of statutory sick days allowed in each sector.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The most recent figures available are for 1989 when about 4·7 million days were lost due to sickness absence in the non-industrial civil service, (accounting for about 4 per cent. of days available in the year). The statutory sick pay (SSP) scheme extends to Government employees. SSP is payable for up to 28 weeks for a period of incapacity for work.

VAT

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that zero rating of children's clothes and footwear remains as a permanent feature of VAT harmonisation in the European Community.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Goverment are pledged to retain zero-rating for children's clothing and footwear. In discussions with the European Commission and other member states the Government have made it clear that they could not accept any proposal which would restrict our ability to retain current zero-rated items. The United Kingdom's position is ultimately safeguarded, in that changes to EC tax law require the unanimous agreement of member states.

Duty-Free Allowances

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the impact on revenue from taxes and duties on the sale of *(a)* alcoholic drinks, *(b)* tobacco products, *(c)* perfumery and *(d)* other taxable or dutiable items from the ending of duty-free allowances for travellers between member states of the European Community;

(2) what is his estimate of the revenue forgone by the Treasury as a result of the sale of duty-free *(a)* alcoholic drinks, *(b)* tobacco products, *(c)* perfumery and *(d)* other taxable or dutiable items for travellers between the United Kingdom and (i) other member states of the European Community and (ii) elsewhere.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 13 June 1991]:* Reliable estimates cannot be provided because there is no detailed information on the amount of duty free goods brought into the United Kingdom.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England concerning the provision of information to the United States federal prosecution authorities regarding documents covering the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 13 June 1991]:* My right hon. Friend meets the governor regularly and they discuss a wide range of subjects.

WALES

Hostel Deficit Grant

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total number of units of accommodation provided for from hostel deficit grant in each of the past five years;

(2) what was the amount of hostel deficit grant paid to housing associations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of special needs units and the amount of hostel deficit grant provided towards operating costs in each of the last five years is given in the following table:

	Bedspaces	£
1986-87	133	32,227
1987-88	163	54,324
1988-89	203	94,996
1989-90	485	338,497
1990-91	569	754,080

Special needs management allowance replaced hostel deficit grant for 234 bedspaces special needs schemes beginning operation in 1990-91 at a cost of £945,180.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many court summonses were issued by Welsh local authorities in relation to poll tax payments in 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of court summonses for non-payment of community charge in Wales to 31 March 1991 was 297,019.

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average percentage of the total of the poll tax bills collected by Welsh local authorities for the last financial year.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Local authorities in Wales currently estimate that, in respect of community charges for 1990-91, they will collect 94 per cent. of the full amount due.

School Premises

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales do not meet the requirements laid down in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally. It is the duty of LEAs and others directly responsible for schools to ensure that school premises conform to the standards prescribed in the regulations.

Housing Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his parliamentary replies of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *571*, and 6 June, *Official Report*, column *311*, whether the earlier contracts awarded to Miss C. Lesley Andrews and Aldbourne Associates were won subsequent to competitive tender after open advertisement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many housing consultancy contracts have been awarded to Aldbourne Associates Ltd. by *(a)* competitive tendering and *(b)* fixed fee; and if he will list the appropriate financial years and financial commitments for such contracts.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None: I take it that the hon. Gentleman uses the term "fixed fee" to denote a contract under which the payments made will in all circumstances conform to the total established for the contract at the outset.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales pursuant to his parliamentary answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *311*, (1) if the housing consultancy contract with Miss C. Lesley Andrews was renegotiated when Aldbourne Associates Ltd. took over responsibility for it;

(2) when Aldbourne Associates Ltd. took over responsibility for the housing consultancy contract given initially to Miss C. Lesley Andrews.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The contracts were not taken over in the sense the questions imply. The initial contract was made with Miss Andrews trading under her own name. The 1985 contract was made with Aldbourne Associates, under which name she then traded and on whose behalf she signed. The 1988 and 1989 contracts were made with Miss Andrews trading as Aldbourne Associates, and the 1990 and 1991 contracts with Miss Andrews trading as Aldbourne Associates Ltd. Negotiations have preceded the making of each contract.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his parliamentary replies of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *571*, and 6 June, *Official Report*, column *311*, if he will list the full business name and address of Aldbourne Associates.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The full business name and address of Aldbourne Associates is as follows:

Aldbourne Associates Ltd.
Ulmus
Ogbourne St. George Road
Aldbourne
Wiltshire SN8 2LD

Nebulisers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to Welsh health authorities on the supply of nebulisers on prescription or on loan from hospital dispensaries to patients discharged from hospital after treatment for chest diseases.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue such guidelines. Although nebulising equipment is not available on the NHS on the prescription of a general practitioner, it may be prescribed under the NHS by a hospital consultant if he or she considers it to be clinically necessary for the patient. Nebulisers are normally provided on loan free of charge for as long as is considered necessary.

Further Education

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which six colleges of further education failed to respond to the questionnaire sent by Her Majesty's inspectors in connection with their survey of communication skills, numeracy and information technology in further education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are a number of reasons why certain colleges did not respond and I shall write to my hon. Friend.

EMPLOYMENT

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his Department during the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Jackson: No central record of videos purchased by the Department is held. This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Hospitality

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the expenditure covered by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Jackson: The total expenditure by the Department of Employment on official hospitality was £97,000 in 1989-90 and £100,000 in 1990-91. The amount spent in 1991-92 will be reported to Parliament in the usual way.

Sick Building Syndrome

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *502*, when he expects the Health and Safety Executive to make a decision regarding a possible epidemiological study on sick building syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In accordance with its annual planning cycle, the Health and Safety Executive will reach a decision in the autumn on whether to fund an epidemiological study on sick building syndrome.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Private Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many patients *(a)* in total and *(b)* from hospitals and homes owned by the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards were referred to private residential and nursing homes in each of the past five years;

(2) what hospitals and other institutions within the national health service referred patients to private residential and nursing homes in the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards in each year since 1 April 1985.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Fergal Carraher

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the grounds for refusing access to the autopsy report on Mr. Fergal Carraher by the representatives of the Carraher family.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the Coroners (Practice and Procedures) Rules (NI) 1963, the decision whether and, if so, when to make available to properly interested persons a report of a post-mortem examination of the body of a person whose death has been reported to a coroner, is entirely a matter for the coroner concerned. He is an independent judicial officer.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Land

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what animals it is permissible to graze on set-aside land; and whether such animals may be sold for slaughter for human consumption;

(2) if he will make a statement on the grazing of horses on set-aside land.

Mr. Curry: The grazed fallow option of the set-aside scheme allows for agricultural animals, defined as cattle, sheep, goats, deer and horses, to be grazed on set-aside land, subject to certain conditions. Agricultural animals can be grazed under the non-agricultural use option, provided they do not form part of an agricultural production process.

GATT and Export Refunds

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had recently with the European Commission on GATT and export refunds; and when he will be resuming these negotiations.

Mr. Curry: The Council of Ministers regularly takes stock of the GATT agriculture negotiations with the Commission, most recently at the Council meeting on 20-25 May. The Commission negotiates on behalf of the Community in the negotiations which are still proceeding.

Food and Agriculture (Trade Balance)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whom he has consulted so far in his review of the United Kingdom balance of trade in food and agriculture.

Mr. Curry: I have spoken to a wide range of individuals and organisations in the agriculture and horticulture, food and drink manufacturing, food retailing and consumer fields.

Animal Deaths

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number and species of animals deaths suspected to be caused by pesticides for each available year since 1979; and what proportion of the deaths were suspected to be caused by *(a)* deliberate abuse of pesticides, *(b)* illegal poison of baits, *(c)* legitimate use of pesticides and *(d)* other causes.

Mr. Maclean: Information from 1985 onwards is contained in published reports on "Investigations of Suspected Poisoning of Animals by Pesticides in Great Britain," copies of which are placed in the Library of the House. The report for 1990 will be issued very shortly.

Veterinary Products

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average length of time taken to test and approve a veterinary compound for use on livestock; and what was the time taken for the most recently licensed sheep dip compound.

Mr. Maclean: Following its establishment as a next steps agency in April 1990, one of the veterinary medicines directorate's published 1991 targets is for 100 per cent. of assessments to be completed within 120 days clock time —that is, excluding time when an application is referred back to the applicant for further information—of acceptance.

The most recently licensed sheep dip compound was approved in 1988 and its assessment took 498 days clock time to complete.

New Forest

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food whether the Forestry Commission intends to pay the council tax contributions of its employees, the New Forest keepers.

Mr. Curry: The Forestry Commission will follow guidance that the Treasury will be issuing to Government Departments generally on this matter when the tax is implemented.

Pesticides

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the dates of commencement of the review of pesticide active ingredients for all those that are currently under review.

Mr. Gummer: The dates when the reviews started of the pesticide active ingredients currently under review are detailed as follows.

Pesticide active ingredient	*Date of review*
Alachlor	January 1990
Atrazine	November 1990
Benomyl	December 1989
Bromoxynil	November 1989
Captan	March 1988
Carbendazim	December 1989
Chlorothalonil	April 1990
Demeton-S-methyl	June 1989
Demeton-S-methyl-sulphone	June 1989
Diazinon	April 1991
Dichlorvos	February 1990
Dithiocarbamates:	
Ferbam	April 1991
Mancozeb	
Maneb	
Nabam	
Propineb	
Thiram	
Zineb	
Zineb-ethylene-thiuram-disulphide adduct	
Ziram	
Dinocap	January 1990
Ioxynil	November 1990
Isoproturon	November 1990
Lindane	March 1989
Linuron	November 1989
Methyl bromide	May 1988
Monolinuron	November 1990
Oxydemeton-methyl	June 1989
Simazine	November 1990
Synthetic Pyrethroids:	
Cypermethrin	April 1989
Deltamethrin	
Permethrin	
8 post-1981 compounds	
Thiophanate methyl	December 1989
Thiabendazole	December 1989
Tecnazene	February 1989
2-Aminobutane	August 1990
2,4,D	November 1989
Vinclozolin	April 1991

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the pesticide active ingredients which he has decided not to review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The pesticide active ingredients which are not yet subject to routine review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides are those which have been approved from 1981 onwards.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answers to the hon. Member for South Shields of 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *340-43*, if he will make a statement on the reasons for including some pesticide active ingredients in the list for having had the reviews completed and also on a list of those currently under review.

Mr. Gummer: The list of pesticide active ingredients in my previous answer was annotated with "P" for partial and "F" for full reviews. Those pesticides for which a partial review has been concluded, but which are nevertheless due for full review, still appear as "under review".

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *340-43*, concerning the review of active ingredients of pesticides; if he will give the dates when the review of each pesticide listed was completed.

Mr. Gummer: The dates when the reviews were completed of the active ingredients listed in the answer given to the hon. Member for South Shields on 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *340-43*, are detailed as follows:

Active ingredient	*Date of review*
TBTO[1]	May 1990
Alphachloralose[1]	March 1991
Secanol[1]	March 1991

Active ingredient	*Date of review*
Vinclozolin[1]	March 1991
Diazinon	April 1991
Ioxynil	May 1991
Bromoxynil	May 1991
2–Aminobutane[1]	November 1990
Maneb	April 1991
Mancozeb	April 1991
Nabam	April 1991
Zineb	April 1991
Aineb-ethylene-thiuram disulphide adduct	April 1991

[1] Partial review only.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many pesticide active ingredients were awaiting review in June, for each year since 1986.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Blue-ear Disease

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances he would issue licences for the movement of pigs which have been subject to movement restrictions due to blue-ear disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 13 June 1991.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences he has issued for the movement of pigs, giving the locations, date and number of pigs affected in each case from farms which have been subject to movement restrictions due to blue-ear disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Up to the 14 June 735 movement licences have been issued. The rest of the information is not held centrally.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish the names of the farms which have been subject to movement restrictions as a result of blue-ear disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It is not normal practice to release this information.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many pigs out of the total infected with blue-ear disease have died as a result of the infection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The nature of the disease means that it is impossible to be precise about the number of deaths. One of the symptoms of the infection is an increase in the number of still births and abortions but the number of deaths among adult animals is very small.

Sweeteners

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the sweeteners approved for consumption in the United Kingdom, giving the acceptable level of daily intake; and if he will make a statement on the role of the Committee on the Toxicity of Foodstuffs in such approvals and the criteria used in such approvals.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Sweeteners in Food Regulations 1983, as amended, the following sweeteners have been approved for use; the intense sweeteners Acesulfame K, Aspartame, Saccharin and Thaumatin; and the bulk sweeteners hydrogenated glucose syrup, Isomalt, Mannitol, Sorbitol, Xylitol and Lactitol. All have been cleared for need by the Food Advisory Committee and for safety by the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT), which has allocated an acceptable daily intake (ADI) of 0-5 mg per k bodyweight per day for saccharin. The COT takes account of all available toxicological evidence from the manufacturers of the additives and elsewhere including any evidence that some people may suffer adverse reactions from eating a particular substance. The criteria for this are set out in the guidelines for the testing of chemicals for toxicity produced by the committee and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. A copy is in the Library. Similar guidelines have been produced for mutagenicity and carcinogenicity testing.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the views of other European Community countries and the European Community Scientific Committee for Food on the acceptability of cyclamate and neohesperidine as sweeteners; what advice he has received from the Committee on the Toxicity of Foodstuffs on these; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On cyclamate, France, Greece and the United Kingdom have reserved their position pending discussion of a further review of the safety data by the Scientific Committee for Food which the United Kingdom requested as a result of advice from the Committee on Toxicity. No objections have been raised to the inclusion of neohesperidine in the draft directive of sweeteners.

Fish Farming

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much funding is allocated for research and development in fish farming for 1991-92; how much was allocated for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Expenditure on research and development in fish-farming by this Department and the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department under the joint Fish Cultivation Commission is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1980-81	[1]2·3
1981-82	[1]2·5
1982-83	2·6
1983-84	2·6
1984-85	2·6
1985-86	2·5
1986-87	2·8
1987-88	2·9
1988-89	2·9
1989-90	2·7
1990-91	[2]3·0

[1] Estimate.
[2] Provisional.

The exact allocation for 1991-92 has still to be finalised but it is expected to be similar to that for 1990-91.

The figures relate to both in-house and external projects, including those dealing with the investigation and control of fish and shellfish diseases. A figure for 1979-1980 is not readily available.

Salmon (Antibiotics)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assistance his Ministry is giving to United Kingdom salmon farmers to purchase antibiotics; and if he will made a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No assistance is being given by the Ministry to the purchase of antibiotics by United Kingdom salmon farmers.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all pharmaceutical products for use in agriculture and aquaculture known to be used by EC countries but banned in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are reports from some member states of the illegal use of certain hormonal growth-promoting substances which are banned throughout the Community. In the United Kingdom, there are no bans on any other pharmaceutical products for use in agriculture and aquaculture. Decisions on whether they should be licensed or not are based on an assessment of the scientific criteria of safety, quality and efficacy laid down in the Medicines Act 1968.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the costs of product certification for new pharmaceutical products for use in agriculture and aquaculture in pounds sterling for each member state in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is set out in the table. This is based on information circulated by the EC Commission in November 1990 to provide an approximate estimate of the fees payable in each member state. The pounds sterling rates have been converted from ecus at the rate prevailing on 30 November 1990.

Fees payable for authorisation of veterinary medicinal products in EC member states: 1990-91

Country	*Product with new active ingredient (£)*	*Product with established active ingredient (£)*
Belgium	1,079	1,079
Denmark	1,915	1,915
Germany	8,202	2,563
Greece	204	204
Spain	8	8
France	155	155
Ireland	1,468	296
Italy	525	525
Luxembourg	49	49
Netherlands	834	303
Portugal	310	310
United Kingdom	12,000	3,000

Fish Farming (Medicines)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken in response to the British Veterinary Association recommendations concerning a simplified scheme of licensing for medicines used in fish farming; if he will introduce a generic licensing scheme for animal medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A simplified scheme for the licensing of veterinary medicines in general, not just for fish, where limited claims for use are made, was introduced in February 1990. Two simplified licences have subsequently been granted, one of which was for an antibiotic for use in fish.

Veterinary generics may also be licensed if an applicant can demonstrate bioequivalence to a product which is off patent and has been fully licensed in accordance with directive 81/851 for 10 years. Because the directive did not come into effect until 1983 there are currently no such products, although their number will increase rapidly over the next decade.

Canthaxanthin

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussion he has held with representatives of the World Health Organisation regarding the use of canthaxanthin in commercially produced eggs.

Mr. Maclean: None. But I am aware that the monograph published recently by the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives takes a similar position to the independent scientific committees which have advised the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to provide funds for the development of alternatives to use of canthaxanthin in food and animal feedstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that acceptable alternatives to the use of canthaxanthin in food and animal feedstuffs are already available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the use of canthaxanthin in commercially produced eggs.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a small number of representations on the use of canthaxanthin in commercially produced eggs from egg producers, trade associations and colour manufacturers. Most were in response to the formal consultation on the Food Advisory Committee's report on the review of colours in food regulations.

Sow and Penk Internal Drainage District

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors he will take into account when making his decision on the re-establishment of an independent board for the Sow and Penk internal drainage district; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. Curry: We expect to consider the views expressed by the National Rivers Authority and the representations made to the Department about the proposed re-constitution of the Sow and Penk internal drainage board and to reach a decision shortly; we will inform those concerned as soon as possible.

River Catchment Management

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now initiate discussions between his Department and the National Rivers Authority about the steps required to implement the recommendations of the Salmon Advisory Committee on integrated river catchment management in England and Wales, with particular reference to the creation of riparian buffer zones for the protection of fish stocks, as a part of his forthcoming review of the countryside premium scheme.

Mr. Curry: The Department is already in contact with the National Rivers Authority about aspects of the latest report and recommendations of the Salmon Advisory Committee. As my colleagues and I said on the day of publication, this wide-ranging report clearly warrants careful consideration both within and outside the fisheries departments. We are already considering a number of ways of improving and maintaining wildlife habitats and the committee's views will be taken into account during the forthcoming reviews of the countryside premium scheme, the extensification schemes, the environmentally sensitive area schemes and in the revision of the code of good agricultural practice for the protection of water.

SCOTLAND

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the future of the milk marketing board in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for the three milk marketing boards in Scotland to decide on the way forward for their industry. I welcome the current debate on the possibility of change to a co-operative structure which will, I am sure, provide the best means of meeting the challenges ahead and will be in the best interests of all sides of the dairy industry and of consumers.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage increase of child abuse cases for the last available five years in the constituency of Paisley, North; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local information about cases of child abuse referred to social work departments is not collected centrally.

Agricultural Advisory Services

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the budget for the agricultural advisory services in Scotland in each year since 1974, in real terms; and if he will make a statement on his plans for the service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The college budget for the agricultural advisory services in Scotland since 1974, expressed in real terms, is as indicated in the table. It is intended that support for advice which contains elements of public good will continue, but will be kept subject to periodic review. For other kinds of advice, the level of public funding is planned to decrease progressively, as the industry increases the contribution towards the cost of the services from which it derives direct benefit.

SAC—Advisory Services
College budget 1974-75 to 1991-92 expressed in real terms against 1974-75 baseline

£ million

	AFD grant	*Commercial income*	*Total*
1974-75	1·221	0·073	1·294
1975-76	1·248	0·059	1·307
1976-77	1·377	0·066	1·443
1977-78	1·443	0·081	1·524
1978-79	1·559	0·065	1·624
1979-80	1·537	0·115	1·652
1980-81	1·585	0·149	1·734
1981-82	1·929	0·206	2·135
1982-83	2·077	0·221	2·298
1983-84	2·144	0·236	2·380
1984-85	2·126	0·224	2·350
1985-86	2·189	0·207	2·396
1986-87	2·162	0·222	2·384
1987-88	1·878	0·430	2·308
1988-89	1·646	0·508	2·154
1989-90	1·508	0·612	2·120
1990-91	1·442	[1]0·651	2·093
1991-92	1·356	[1]0·707	2·063

[1] Estimate—Assumes 15 per cent. annual growth (in cash terms) over 1989-90 figure.

Dental Health

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in tabular form details of the average number of decayed, missing or filled permanent teeth in 12-year-old children in Scotland in each health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report of the 1988-89 survey of 12-year-old children, published in June 1990 as part of the Scottish health boards' dental epidemiological programme provides details of the average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth in 12-year-old children, and this is as follows:

Health Board	*Average Number per 12 year old Child*			
	Decayed	*Missing*	*Filled*	*Total*
Argyll and Clyde	0·51	0·27	1·49	2·27
Ayrshire and Arran	0·25	0·15	1·99	2·39
Borders	0·33	0·04	1·32	1·69
Dumfries and Galloway	0·42	0·24	1·35	2·01
Fife	0·43	0·23	1·61	2·27
Forth Valley	0·33	0·32	1·69	2·34
Grampian	0·39	0·23	1·38	2·00
Greater Glasgow	0·58	0·34	1·70	2·62
Highland	0·37	0·17	1·26	1·80
Lanarkshire	0·46	0·31	2·21	2·98
Lothian	0·22	0·11	1·01	1·34
Orkney	0·06	0·32	1·34	1·72
Shetland	0·07	0·07	2·40	2·54
Tayside	0·27	0·23	1·64	2·14
Western Isles	0·51	0·44	2·18	3·13

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the water supply in Scotland is now fluoridated artificially; and what is his policy for ensuring the optimum level of fluoridation in the interests of securing better dental health.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At present there is no artificial fluoridation of water supplies in Scotland, but I shall shortly be issuing guidance to health boards and water authorities, encouraging the introduction of fluoridation schemes. The improvement of dental and oral health is among our health priorities in Scotland as set out in

"Health Education in Scotland: A National Policy Statement" which I published on 25 March. Our target is that by the year 2000, 60 per cent. of five-year-old school entrants should neither have cavities nor have had fillings or extractions and that of adults in the 45 to 54 years age group, less than 10 per cent. should be edentulous. Fluoridation of the water supply will facilitate the attainment of these targets.

Hospital Waste

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the standards of waste incinerators in Scotland's national health service hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The standards of clinical waste incinerators in the national health service in Scotland are expected to comply with current pollution control legislation.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether waste from hospitals in Scotland is entering water supplies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As far as I am aware no hospital waste enters potable water supplies in Scotland.

Health Service Employees

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses, doctors and others involved in treatment are employed in Sottish hospitals; and how many officials not involved in treatment are employed by health boards and on site to run those hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The locations at which staff are based can be identified but it cannot be determined how many of them provide treatment in the hospitals and how many provide treatment in the community using the hospital as a base. Equally staff not providing treatment may be based in hospitals but work in support of those involved in treatment in the community.

As at 30 September 1990 there were 141,888 employed in the NHS in Scotland. This equates to 118,025·2 whole-time equivalent staff of whom 82,721·4 were involved in treatment and 35,303·8 were support staff. The latter category includes administrative and clerical, catering, laundry, domestic, portering, maintenance and works staff.

Prisoners (Northern Ireland Conflict)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the figures for each year since 1980 of the numbers of prisoners convicted in Scotland for offences arising out of the Northern Ireland conflict;

(2) what is the total number of prisoners serving sentences in Scotland for offences arising out of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of requests by prisoners for transfer to Northern Ireland and the outcome of these requests in each year since 1985; and whether these requests came from loyalists, republicans or prisoners whose offences were unconnected to the Northern Ireland conflict.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	Number of requests	Outcome		
		Agreed	Not agreed	Request withdrawn by prisoner
1985	3	2	1	—
1986	1	1	—	—
1987	3	—	3	—
1988	2	1	1	—
1989	1	—	1	—
1990	5	2	2	1

Prisoners are not classified by reference to the political or other motivation of their offences.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether requests by prisoners for permanent transfer from Northern Ireland are processed by the prison governor and may be rejected at this stage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the figures for each year since 1985 of the number of requests by prisoners for transfer to Northern Ireland for accumulated visits; if he will give the outcome of these requests; and whether these requests came from loyalists, republicans or prisoners whose offences were unconnected to the Northern Ireland conflict.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	Number of requests	Outcome	
		Agreed	Not agreed
1985	1	—	1
1986	—	—	—
1987	—	—	—
1988	1	1	—
1989	—	—	—
1990	1	—	1

Prisoners are not classified by reference to the political or other motivation of their offences.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether requests by prisoners from Northern Ireland for temporary transfer to take advantage of accumulated visits are initially processed by the prison governor and may be rejected at this stage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Defence Industries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the benefits to the United Kingdom of the European Community Perifra programme on defence industry diversification.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 13 June 1991]:* The Government have applied to the Commission for grant of £4 million from the Perifra initiative. The initiative includes, but is not confined to, the purpose indicated by the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects the Director of Public Prosecutions to reach a decision regarding possible action against police officers involved in the Birmingham pub bombings case.

The Attorney-General: The Devon and Cornwall police are carrying out further inquiries at the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions, who will not be in a position to make a decision on what action, if any, should be taken until after he has considered the report on these inquiries.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total cost to public funds of fees paid *(a)* to Crown counsel and *(b)* to counsel for the appellants for their services in relation to the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: Records of the amounts paid to counsel in respect of the 1976 application for leave to appeal are no longer available. For the 1987 appeal a total of £222,484 was paid to the three Crown counsel and a total of £546,084 was paid to counsel for the appellants. No figures are yet available for the 1991 appeal.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General what has been the total cost to public funds of *(a)* the trial of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings *(b)* each of their appeals in 1976, 1987 and 1991 and *(c)* their civil action against the West Midlands and Lancashire police forces.

The Attorney-General: The cost of the original trial at the Crown court at Lancaster in 1975 amounted to £237,683, in respect of fees paid to both prosecution and defence lawyers and witness expenses.

The cost of the 1976 application for leave to appeal was approximately £7,361 excluding Crown costs, records of which are no longer available. The costs of the 1987 appeal total £1,084,557. Complete figures are not at present available for the 1991 appeal.

Figures for the civil actions are no longer available.

Civil Legal Aid

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General what was the number of successful applicants for civil legal aid and total spending on civil legal aid for each year since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The number of individuals obtaining civil legal aid and total spending are detailed in tables published in legal aid annual reports (to 1988-89) and the Legal Aid Board annual report for 1989-90, copies of which are held in the library. The number of successful applicants for civil (non-matrimonial) legal aid for the year 1990-91 was 159,729. Total spending on civil (non-matrimonial) legal aid for this period was £191,157,000.

Small Claims Courts

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Attorney-General in how many cases coming before the small claims courts in the last year were *(a)* both parties represented by solicitors, *(b)* one party represented by solicitors and *(c)* neither party represented by solicitors.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not collected.

Lloyd's Syndicates

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Attorney-General if he has received any progress report from the Serious Fraud Office on the investigation into Lloyd's syndicates announced by the hon. Member for Warwicksire, North (Mr. Maude) on 25 March.

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office has today issued a press notice in the following terms:

"As indicated by the Minister for Corporate Affairs in the House of Commons on the 25th March 1991, the Serious Fraud Office has been examining a matter at Lloyd's to see whether there is a case that it should take on.

The SFO has decided, in the light of its initial enquiries, that no further investigation is warranted."

ENVIRONMENT

East Quayside Development

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain transcripts of the Tyne Tees TV and BBC North interviews with the chief executive of the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation on 18 February relating to contracts for the East Quayside development.

Mr. Key: I have no plans to do so.

Environmental Protection Act

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to monitor the implementation of relevant sections of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Implementation of part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be monitored primarily through the Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution/local authority liaison committee (IPLA), which was established in December 1989 and which will in future meet three times a year, and by means of the regular statistical returns that local authorities have been asked to make.

Section 68 of the Act will require my right hon. Friend to keep under review the discharge by waste regulation authorities of their functions under part II. That review will be undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution which will carry out regular audits of waste regulation authorities' performance. Section 67 of the Act will also require waste regulation authorities to publish annual reports on the discharge of their functions.

To monitor the implementation of part IV, my Department is planning an annual survey, in selected parts of the country, to assess levels of street cleanliness. We also intend to set up a database of information on the implementation of part IV by local authorities, based on regular data collected by the Tidy Britain Group.

Section 143 of the Act concerns registers of land which may be contaminated. The Government intend to require local authorities to open section 143 registers to the public in April 1993. We will ask authorities at that time to provide a summary of the information held on the registers.

The Government will be discussing with the local authority associations both the need for and the practicality of monitoring the implementation of sections 149-151 relating to control of stray dogs and enforcement of collar and tag identification.

The operation of regulations under section 152 of the Act to ban the burning of all crop residues; to permit exemptions to the ban and to control permitted burning will be monitored by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Housing Associations

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation serve the area covered by the Hackney, North and Stoke Newington constituency; what are their names; how many tenants they have; how many units they manage; and what level of overall financial support they receive from the Housing Corporation;

(2) how many housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation which serve the area covered by the Hackney, North and Stoke Newington constituency are black and ethnic minority associations; what are their names; how many tenants they have; how many units they manage; and what level of overall financial support they receive from the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Yeo: The Housing Corporation has responsibility for keeping a statutory register of housing associations and allocating public funds to them. In this capacity, the corporation holds most of the information sought by the hon. Member. However, the information is classed according to local authority areas, rather than parliamentary constituencies. I have therefore asked the corporation to write to the hon. Member with information relating to the London borough of Hackney. A copy of the reply will be placed in the Library.

Mobile Homes

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has completed his mobile homes research; when he expects to publish its conclusions; and how.

Sir George Young: The report on the first stage of the research, a postal survey of local authorities entitled "Mobile Homes in England and Wales", was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in March. The researchers at Birmingham university are now concluding their work on the main physical and social survey of mobile home sites. We expect to publish a final report later this year.

Gas Control Projects

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount available to local authorities via supplementary credit approvals for gas control projects; and if he will list the applications received from local authorities for those credit approvals.

Mr. Baldry: A total of £28 million supplementary credit approvals (SCAs) have been set aside for remedial gas control projects at closed landfill sites in the financial year 1991-92. The following applications from local authorities for SCAs have been received so far:

Authority	*Bid* £
South Bedfordshire DC	12,465
Buckinghamshire CC	20,000
South Buckinghamshire DC	6,180
Cambridgeshire CC	272,000
Cheshire CC	1,300,000
Chester City	1,575
Cornwall CC	814,000
Cumbria CC	123,000
Derbyshire CC	307,435
Devon CC	106,000
East Devon DC	30,000
Torbay BC	39,700
Dorset CC	715,000
Durham CC	407,000
Basildon DC	200,000
Hampshire CC	167,000
Eastleigh BC	3,000
New Forest DC	1,555
Hereford and Worcester CC	4,500
Hertfordshire CC	356,000
Three Rivers DC	112,400
Humberside CC	26,500
East Yorkshire BC	12,000
Scunthorpe BC	80,000
Tonbridge and Malling BC	4,550
Lancashire CC	435,000
Leicestershire CC	409,000
Blaby DC	235,000
Hinckley and Bosworth BC	118,000
Leicester City	230,000
Northamptonshire CC	1,382,287
Northampton BC	322,500
North Yorkshire CC	399,050
Nottingham City	78,000
Rushcliffe BC	31,500
Oxfordshire CC	493,000
Vale of White Horse DC	95,000
Shropshire CC	359,300
South Shropshire DC	205,000
Somerset CC	460,000
Suffolk CC	618,282
Guildford BC	55,000
Nuneaton and Bedford BC	35,000
West Sussex CC	491,000
Mid Sussex DC	20,000
West Wiltshire DC	18,000
Hillingdon LB	1,000,000
Hounslow LB	69,202
Bexley LB	2,272,103
Greater Manchester WDA	142,000
Bury MBC	318,000
Oldham MBC	183,000
Rochdale MBC	60,000
Stockport MBC	133,420
Wigan MBC	165,000
Merseyside WDA	665,000
Barnsley MBC	173,300
Doncaster MBC	82,300
Rotherham MBC	249,000
Sheffield City	97,500
Gateshead MBC	116,000
Birmingham City	81,000
Coventry City	700,000
Dudley MBC	974,731
Sandwell MBC	1,606,400
Solihull MBC	470,000
Walsall MBC	1,805,660
Wolverhampton MBC	671,000
Total	23,646,395

Petroleum Coke

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what restrictions have been placed on the use of petroleum coke in areas covered by the Smoke Control Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Only fuel authorised by regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 34(1) of the Clean Air Act 1956 may be used or supplied in smoke control areas unless it is burnt on an appliance exempted for that purpose by regulations under section 11(4). Existing regulations do not provide for the use of petroleum coke or exempt an appliance for its use. Regulations, due to come into force on 1 July this year, will permit the use of one product which is a blend of petroleum coke and coal. Enforcement of the provisions of the Act to prevent the use or supply of unauthorised fuel rests with local authorities.

Orimulsion

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution about the use of orimulsion in Richborough and Ince power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Proposals by PowerGen to burn the fuel orimulsion at Richborough and Ince power stations were discussed in considerable detail with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to ensure that releases of pollutants to the atmosphere were kept within limits approved by the inspectorate. In both cases the requirements laid down by the inspectorate have been set out in registration certificates which have been placed on public registers. These registers are available for inspection by any member of the general public at the relevant HMIP and local authority offices.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what housing consultancy contracts his Department has with Aldbourne Associates Ltd.; in what year they were awarded; what is their value; and whether they were awarded by open competition.

Mr. Tim Yeo: The Department has no housing consultancy contracts with Aldbourne Associates Ltd.

Renaval

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been spent by way of the European Community's Renaval programme in *(a)* the Plymouth area and *(b)* north-east England; what kind of projects received sums of money in each of the two localities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: No ERDF grant has yet been paid to participants in the Renaval programmes in Plymouth nor the north-east of England due to their recent approval. However, within the programmes so far one project to the value of £1·6 million has been approved under the Plymouth programme for the development of industrial land. In north-east England eight projects have been approved to the value of £2·4 million. These are related to the development of land and industrial premises, and improving the environment and image of the area.

Shopping Centre, Trafford

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment has the ultimate responsibility for deciding the planning application for a regional shopping centre in Trafford, announced by him in July 1989 and confirmed in May 1991 as the preferred choice; with which Government Department interested parties should negotiate; and when a final decision is expected to be given.

Mr. Yeo: A decision on the planning application for the Trafford centre will be taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who is currently considering representations about the centre's implications for the M63. He will inform parties of the results of his consideration as soon as possible. I cannot forecast when a final decision may be given.

Arrangements for any works which may need to be made to the motorway are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Sewage Works

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the progress of water company improvements for sewage treatment works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The latest figures available from the National Rivers Authority demonstrate further improvements in the operational performance of sewage treatment works. In 1990 the proportion of works complying with their current consents, including the time-limited consents granted in 1989-90 in connection with the water industry's current £1·2 billion improvement programme, was 92 per cent. Time-limited consent conditions are superseded by long-term performance measures as the improvements work through. The authority believes that the proportion of works which already meet these long-term measures has risen from 77 per cent. in 1986, and 83 per cent. in 1988, to some 88 per cent. in 1990. The water industry's enhanced investment programme is therefore making good progress. The Director General of Water Services is continuing to monitor the programme.

Drinking Water

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by water company area *(a)* the date by which he expects the drinking water standards set in the EC drinking water quality directive to be met and *(b)* the number of people currently supplied from non-complying sources.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 June 1991]:* The current programme of improvements is incorporated in undertakings under section 20 of the Water Act 1989 and in conditions attached to authorisations under regulation 4 of the Water Quality Regulations, all of which are in the Library. Most breaches of the standards will have been remedied by the end of 1995. Statistics of the number of people currently supplied from non-complying sources are not readily available. All public water supplies already comply with the great majority of the standards in the EC drinking water directive.

Housing Renovation Grants

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring in legislation to remove the means test from housing renovation grants for the disabled.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 13 June 1991]:* By applying a test of resources it is possible to ensure that public expenditure is directed towards those people who are in greatest need. There are no plans for legislative changes at present. The new arrangements for house renovation and disabled facilities grants introduced last year will be reviewed later this year. We will consider the need for changes in the light of this review.

Housing Benefits Regulations

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of subsidy payments made under schedule 1(F) of the Housing Benefits General Regulations 1987, (SI, 1987, No. 1971) are to be paid to the local authority; how many payments have been made to the landlord; and what is the average payment over the last four years.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

Authorities are not required to identify separately to this Department payments of housing benefit which are eligible for subsidy under the provisions of paragraph 1(f) of part 1 of schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the statutory provisions for establishing the authority responsible for deciding if the water supply should be fluoridated artifically as a dental health measure; and if he will publish in tabular form a list of water companies showing which of them do and do not add fluoride.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985 provides that at the request of a health authority a water undertaker may increase the fluoride content of the water supplied by it to a specified area.

Table 1 lists the water companies in England. Table 2 lists companies with which it is known that arrangements have been made to increase the fluoride content of the water supplied by them.

TABLE 1

WATER COMPANIES

Water Service Companies
- Anglian Water Services Limited
- North West Water Limited
- Northumbrian Water Limited
- Severn Trent Water Limited
- South West Water Services Limited
- Southern Water Services Limited
- Thames Water Utilities Limited
- Wessex Water Services Limited
- Yorkshire Water Services Limited

Statutory Water Companies
- Bournemouth and District Water Company
- Bristol Waterworks Company
- Cambridge Water Company
- Chester Waterworks Company
- Cholderton and District Water Company
- Colne Valley Water Company
- East Anglian Water Company
- Eastbourne Water Company
- East Surrey Water Company
- East Worcestershire Waterworks Company
- Essex Water Company
- Folkestone and District Water Company
- Hartlepools Water Company
- Lee Valley Water Company
- Mid Kent Water Company
- Mid Southern Water Company
- Mid Sussex Water Company
- Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company
- North Surrey Water Company
- Portsmouth Water Company
- Rickmansworth Water Company
- South Staffordshire Water Company
- Sunderland and South Shields Water Company
- Sutton and District Water Company
- Tendring Hundred Water Company
- West Hampshire Water Company
- West Kent Water Company
- York Waterworks Company

TABLE 2

WATER COMPANIES WITH WHOM ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO INCREASE THE FLUORIDE LEVELS OF WATER SUPPLIED BY THEM

Water Service Companies
- Anglian Water Services Limited
- North West Water Limited
- Northumbrian Water Limited
- Severn Trent Water Limited
- Thames Water Utilities Limited

Statutory Water Companies
- Colne Valley Water Company
- East Worcestershire Water Company
- Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company
- South Staffordshire Water Company

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Public Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which his Department was responsible for each of the past five years together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most recent information available for public appointments for which the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are responsible is contained in the table. Information on appointments for each of the past five years is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I also refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Public body	*Number of appointments*	*Full/Part time*	*Salary*	*Renewal date*
Government Hospitality Fund Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine	5	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between March 1992 and May 1995
Imperial War Museum (Board of Trustees)	2	Part-time	Nil	1991 and 1993
British Council Board	2	Part-time	Nil	Indefinite
Imperial College of Science and Technology (Governing Body)	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
Great Britain China Centre	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
Great Britain East Europe Centre	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
Great Britain USSR Association	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent Observer Status
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	10	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between 1991 and 1994
Universities China Committee	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
School of Oriental and African Studies (Governing Body)	2	Part-time	Nil	1995
Advisory Board to the Wilson Chair of International Politics: University College of Wales, Aberystwyth	1	Part-Time	Nil	November 1992
Irish Pensions Appeals Tribunal	2	Part-Time	Per diem Expenses	Permanent
Commonwealth Institute: Chairman of the Scottish Committee	1	Part-Time	Nil	November 1992
Commonwealth Institute: Director General	1	Full-Time	Salary by Negotiation betweenthe public body and individuals concerned	September 1991
Commonwealth Institute: Chairman of Board of Governors	1	Part-Time	Not salaried, incumbent paid honorarium	January 1993
Commonwealth Institute: Vice Chairman of Board of Governors	1	Part-Time	Nil	May 1992
Commonwealth Institute: Member of Board of Governors	12	Part-Time	Nil	Various dates between June 1991 and May 1994
Sightsavers	2	Part-Time	Nil	April 1992
Commonwealth Foundation	1	Part-time	Nil	February 1993
Diplomatic Service Appeals Boards	8	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Various dates between July 1992 and January 1994
Wilton Park Academic Council	18	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between 1992 and 1993
Anglo-Irish Encounter	2	Part-time	Nil	Indefinite
Lloyd Foundation	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent (ex officio)
Economic and Social Committee for Overseas Research	18	Part-time	Nil	Various dates in 1991 and 1992
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission	15	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between July 1991 and August 1993
Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases	6	Part-time	Nil	Indefinite

Public body	Number of appointments	Full/Part time	Salary	Renewal date
Overseas Service Pension Scheme	4	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Indefinite
Indian Family Pension Scheme	8	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Indefinite
Commonwealth Development Corporation	7	Part-time	Salaries by negotiation	Various dates in 1991 and 1992
Crown Agents	8	1 full-time 7 part-time	Salaries by negotiation	Various dates in 1991 and 1992
Institute of Development Studies	22	Part-time	Per diem expenses	1992

Hospitality

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the expenditure covered by his Department's hospitality fund for the financial year *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Expenditure by both wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on hospitality for the financial year 1989-90 was £6,428,000. The provisional outturn for 1990-91 is £6,358,000 and the spend to date for 1991-92 is £900,000.

These figures include the grant in aid to the Government hospitality fund, which meets the costs of ministerial entertainment and guest of Government visits for all Government Departments, the cost of other official entertainment by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and diplomatic missions overseas.

Video Recordings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the titles of the video recordings purchased by his Department during the financial year 1990-91 and 1991-92 to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following recordings were purchased, either for internal training purposes or for use by posts overseas in support of their information or commercial objectives:

Financial year 1990-91
Trooping the Colour
Bank of England
Physics Means Business
The New London
Kingdom of the Seas
You can't do it all
The Dreaded Appraisal
Can You Spare a Moment
Stress
This is Going to Hurt Me More Than it Hurts You
Budgeting
I'll be in Touch
Oh What the Hell (parts 1 and 2)
Decisions, Decisions
Where There's a Will
Speak for Yourself
CCTV Training (series of 8)
Lets be Fair
Viruses on Personal Computers

Financial year 1991-92 to date
On the Waterfront
Development through Science
Sue Lawley interviews the Prime Minister
90 Glorious Years
Earth in Balance
The Energy Alternative
In Public in Private
An Inside Job
Britain and the European Community

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the discussions between the United Kingdom, United States of America and Hong Kong Governments on the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the press release of 5 June entitled "Vietnamese asylum seekers", copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people detained in the camps in Hong Kong are under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Because of the way statistics are collected, no exact figures are readily available on the numbers of Vietnamese boat people in camps in Hong Kong under 18 years of age. However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to his question of 10 June 1991 at column *412*.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the amount spent on maintaining the detention centres for boat people in Hong Kong, together with the sum for providing food for detainees for the last year in which figures are available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: From 1979 to 1991, Her Majesty's Government, the Hong Kong Government and the UNHCR spent approximately £343 million on maintaining those in the detention centres in Hong Kong. The cost of food for the financial year 1989-90 was £8·14 million.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has of the number of deaths of Vietnamese boat people during their journey to Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Neither the Hong Kong Government nor UNHCR has any reliable estimate of the number of Vietnamese migrants who have died travelling to Hong Kong.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which voluntary agencies run education programmes in detention centres in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Save the Children, International Social Service and Caritas.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many well baby clinics are operated in Hong Kong detention centres; and by which agencies.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Each of the 10 detention centres has a well baby clinic, operated by Save the Children and Medecins Sans Frontieres.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the criteria used for determining political refugee status in the screening process used for Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The criterion used is that contained in the 1951 United Nations convention and the 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees which states that a person is a refugee if he has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and who, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of his country of nationality.

Screening procedures in Hong Kong were evolved in co-operation with UNHCR which monitors their application.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to China regarding the treatment of boat people travelling to Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have on a number of occasions asked the Chinese Government to treat all undocumented Vietnamese found illegally in China in accordance with the comprehensive plan of action.

Hong Kong

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call for a report on why Lee Bun and her husband were refused asylum in Hong Kong; and what information he has over their fate after they had returned to China.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Hong Kong Government have informed us that Li Bin and her husband, Li Qing-Ming, entered Hong Kong illegally on 2 September 1989. They did not seek asylum. They first came into contact with the Hong Kong authorities on 6 December when they were arrested, trying to buy forged Thai passports. They had in their possession US$77,000 and HK$28,000 in cash. The couple subsequently claimed that they had been involved in the political protests in China from April to June 1989 and feared that they would be persecuted if returned to China. This claim was carefully examined by Hong Kong Government officials.

As stated in court it appeared that there were material shortcomings and suspected fabrications in their account, particularly in Mr. Li's account of his alleged medical qualifications and experience, the couple's alleged involvement in the student movement and protests, and their failure to account adequately for the large sums of money in their possession. The Lis went through the whole legal appeals procedure in Hong Kong and following the dismissal of the couple's case by the immigration tribunal, the High Court and the Court of Appeal, they returned voluntarily to China in July 1990.

We have no information on the couple after their return to China. The Hong Kong Government have asked the Chinese authorities for information on them.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of his Department on repatriation of orphaned children.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The policy agreed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is that no child will be repatriated to Vietnam unless he/she has a family to return to.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many returnees have been contacted by the British embassy in Hanoi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Hanoi makes regular visits to areas where significant numbers of migrants have returned from Hong Kong but does not maintain precise details of numbers of returnees seen. Since December 1989, 11 such visits have been made. Many of the 51 returnees sent back on 12 December 1989 have been contacted more than once.

Soviet Research Vessels

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what general information he has on the technical capabilities of the Soviet research vessel Akademik Boris Petrov in British waters.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that this vessel is equipped for the detection of radioactivity levels.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what security considerations apply to visits by Soviet research vessels to British waters.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Each application is considered on its merits in relation to the proposed programme of research and the nature of our security interests in the area concerned.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his Soviet counterpart regarding the visit of the Soviet research vessel Akademik Boris Petrov to British waters.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. An application was received from the Soviet embassy and dealt with by this Department in the normal way.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to carry out a review of the high incidence of low-flying helicopter activity in the constituency of South Down.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are currently no plans to carry out a review of low-flying helicopter activity in the

South Down area. Flights by military helicopters are carried out for operational reasons, in order to support the RUC in the fight against terrorism. Helicopters are an essential element of the security forces' effort to counter the terrorist threat, which in South Down resulted in the murder of seven soldiers between 1989 and 1990. Helicopters may need to fly low for operational or weather reasons. I regret the inconvenience that this may cause some of the hon. Member's constituents but I can assure him that the amount of flying is kept to a minimum consistent with operational needs.

Military Contracts

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the deciding factor in awarding the contract to Steyr of Austria for small arms;

(2) if he will list the weapons included in the contract awarded by his Department to the Steyr company of Austria.

Mr. Alan Clark: The MOD has no current contract with Steyr of Austria for the supply of small arms.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the percentage of British military contracts awarded to foreign companies in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Alan Clark: The percentage by value of contracts placed with companies located overseas during 1990-91 was approximately 6 per cent. These figures exclude expenditure related to collaborative projects and contracts placed locally overseas. Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

International Military Service

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with British Aerospace about the future of IMS.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

International Signal Corporation

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department provided to the management of Ferranti plc relating to the activities of International Signal Corporation prior to its acquisition by Ferranti plc.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Ministry of Defence was informed of the impending acquisition which was a matter for the commercial judgment of the companies involved.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department provided to the management of Ferranti plc relating to the activities of International Signal Corporation after its acquisition by Ferranti plc.

Mr. Alan Clark: MOD officials had communication with the then chairman and chief executive of Ferranti from the summer of 1988. The nature of the communications are confidential to the Department and the company.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he had with his United States counterpart relating to the activities of International Signal Corporation prior to its acquisition by Ferranti plc.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he had with his United States counterpart relating to the activities of International Signal Corporation after its acquisition by Ferranti plc.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Army Manpower

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the latest available figures on the total numbers of regular service personnel in each of the different ranks of the British Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest available figures, as at 31 March 1991, for the strength of the regular Army by rank are set out in the table.

Army
Ranks strengths

	Number
Officers	
Lieutenant General and above	20
Major General	62
Brigadier	240
Colonel	649
Lieutenant Colonel	1,949
Major	5,330
Captain	5,220
Subalterns[1]	3,410
Officer Designate	629
Total Officers	17,509
Soldiers	
Warrant Officer I	2,272
Warrant Officer II	5,963
Staff Sergeant	7,970
Sergeant	14,750
Corporal	22,588
Lance Corporal	23,120
Private[1]	48,463
Junior Soldiers	5,004
Total Soldiers	130,130
TOTAL OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS	147,639

[1] Includes basic trainees; excludes Brigade of Gurkhas.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the average rate of recruitment and outflow in *(a)* the armoured regiments and *(b)* the infantry regiments in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average rate of recruitment and outflow is set out in the table:

Officers

	Recruits		Outflow	
	Average per year	Rate	Average per year	Rate
Household Cavalry	13	9·1	15	10·5
Royal Armoured Corps	80	7·1	99	8·7
Infantry	202	6·3	251	7·8

1. Rate is per 100 trained officers.
2. Infantry figures exclude Parachute Regiment.
3. Excludes intakes from other ranks.

Soldiers

	Recruits		Outflow	
	Average per year	Rate	Average per year	Rate
Household Cavalry	174	11·7	212	14·2
Royal Armoured Corps	961	11·1	1,034	11·9
Infantry	5,447	15·2	6,136	17·1

1. Recruits exclude rejoined reservists.
2. Rate is per 100 soldiers and juniors.
3. Infantry figures exclude Parachute Regiment.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what has been the average rate of recruitment and outflow in *(a)* the Household Cavalry, *(b)* the Royal Armoured Corps, *(c)* the Guards Division, *(d)* the Scottish Division, *(e)* the Queen's Division, *(f)* the King's Division, *(g)* the Prince of Wales's Division and *(h)* the Light Division in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average rate of recruitment and outflow is set out in the table:

Officers

	Recruits		Outflow	
	Average per year	Rate	Average per year	Rate
Household Cavalry	13	9·1	15	10·5
Royal Armoured Corps	80	7·1	99	8·7
Guards Division	34	7·2	45	9·6
Scottish Division	29	6·1	34	7·1
Queen's Division	38	6·1	52	8·3
King's Division	34	5·8	40	6·8
Prince of Wales's Division	42	6·4	44	6·8
Light Division	25	6·1	36	8·7

1. Rate is per 100 trained officers.
2. Excludes intakes from other ranks.

Soldiers

	Recruits		Outflow	
	Average per year	Rate	Average per year	Rate
Household Cavalry	174	11·7	212	14·2
Royal Armoured Corps	961	11·1	1,034	11·9
Guards Division	991	16·0	1,095	17·6
Scottish Division	724	13·4	803	14·9
Queen's Division	1,112	16·6	1,281	19·1
King's Division	915	14·9	1,020	16·7
Prince of Wales's Division	999	14·7	1,123	16·5
Light Division	706	15·2	814	17·6

1. Recruits exclude rejoined reservists.
2. Rate is per 100 soldiers and juniors.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the latest available figures on the total numbers of regular service personnel in each of the different ranks in *(a)* the Household Cavalry, *(b)* the Royal Armoured Corps, *(c)* the Guards Division, *(d)* the Scottish Division, *(e)* the Queen's Division, *(f)* the King's Division, *(g)* the Prince of Wales's Division and *(h)* the Light Division.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest available figures, as at 31 March 1991, for the strength of the regular Army by rank in each of the divisions are set out in the table:

	Household Cavalry	RAC	Guards	Ranks strengths Scots	Queens	Kings	PoW	Light
Officers								
Lieutenant General and above	—	4	1	3	—	1	2	4
Major General	1	6	7	3	2	4	2	3
Brigadier	4	22	9	9	9	7	11	12
Colonel	6	42	18	12	30	23	23	16
Lieutenant Colonel	10	125	55	60	74	69	78	53
Major	32	328	114	151	197	189	215	121
Captain	50	322	163	140	173	187	193	114
Subalterns[1]	63	355	147	141	157	156	178	107
Total Officers	166	1,204	514	519	642	636	702	430
Soldiers								
Warrant Officer I	9	80	43	40	41	42	48	29
Warrant Officer II	37	275	185	152	198	185	194	142
Staff Sergeant	46	341	242	197	255	238	256	179
Sergeant	123	813	461	393	493	429	500	361
Corporal	197	1,502	808	693	863	806	862	604
Lance Corporal	185	1,502	901	751	929	877	954	618
Private[1]	631	3,459	2,695	2,522	2,548	2,750	3,011	1,823
Junior Soldiers	54	200	234	197	227	216	203	159
Total Soldiers	1,282	8,172	5,569	4,945	5,554	5,543	6,028	3,915
Total Officers and Soldiers	1,448	9,376	6,083	5,464	6,196	6,179	6,730	4,345

[1] Includes basic trainees
[2] Staff Officers shown in late arm corps.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will provide the latest available figures on the average rate of recruitment and outflow over the last 10 years, giving details for each individual infantry, armoured, artillery and engineer regiment named in the Army list;

(2) if he will provide the currently available figures on the total numbers of regular service personnel in each of the different ranks, giving details for each individual infantry, armoured, artillery and engineer regiment named in the Army list.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Army Running Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the approximate average annual running costs of *(a)* the Household Cavalry, *(b)* the Royal Armoured Corps, *(c)* the Guards Division, *(d)* the Scottish Division, *(e)* the Queen's Division, *(f)* the King's Division, *(g)* the Prince of Wales's Division and *(h)* the Light Division;

(2) if he will provide the latest available figures on the approximate average annual running costs of each individual infantry, armoured, artillery and engineer regiment named in the Army list.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information regarding the running costs of individual units, divisions or corps is not held centrally and could be provided only with disproportionate time and effort.

NATO Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what British contribution will be made to the reaction force planning staff at SHAPE.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Respective national contributions to the multinational reaction forces planning staff will be the subject of discussion within the alliance.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what role the RAF will have in *(a)* the new NATO rapid reaction force, *(b)* the new NATO main defence forces and *(c)* the new NATO augmentation forces;

(2) what will be the approximate size of *(a)* the new NATO rapid reaction force, *(b)* the new NATO main defence forces and *(c)* the new NATO augmentation forces;

(3) what British forces will be committed to *(a)* the new NATO rapid reaction force, *(b)* the new NATO main defence forces and *(c)* the new NATO augmentation forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed discussions are continuing on NATO's new force structures.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements will be made for funding the new NATO rapid reaction force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The detailed arrangements for rapid reaction forces are still being developed in NATO. As far as the United Kingdom is concerned, our contribution will be funded from the defence budget agreed in the public expenditure survey.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Allied Command Europe mobile force will have in the new NATO rapid reaction force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO's new force structures will include both immediate and rapid reaction forces. The Allied Command Europe mobile force will form part of the immediate reaction forces. Details are still under discussion.

Armed Forces (Redundancies)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place with the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmens' Families Association regarding possible redundancies from the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are in daily contact with the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association on a wide range of issues, including the implications of "Options for Change". Where redundancies from the armed forces are required and are relevant to the work of the Soldiers', Sailors and Airmen's Families Association we will of course discuss the implications with it.

Operation Granby

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional maintenance costs have been incurred for British military equipment that was used during Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed information on the additional maintenance costs for equipment resulting from use on Operation Granby is still being gathered.

RAF Reserves

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the number and type of ex-RAF pilots who have joined *(a)* the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and *(b)* the RAF Volunteer Reserve.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ten ex-RAF pilots are currently serving in the RAF volunteer reserve forces; numbers and specialisations are as follows:

Royal Auxiliary Air Force
- 3 Nimrod MR
- 1 Hunter/Hawk
- 1 Andover

RAF Volunteer Reserve
- 1 Harrier
- 1 Lightning
- 1 Chipmunk
- 1 Devon
- 1 Vulcan

Nuclear Warheads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account is taken of the International Atomic Energy Agency Safety Series No. 6 Regulations 1985, as amended in 1990, in the safety procedures drawn up by Her Majesty's Government to cover the land, sea and air transport, respectively, of nuclear warheads.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In formulating safety procedures for nuclear warhead transport, full account is taken of national and international civil regulations on transport of radioactive materials, where relevant.

Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the number of claims settled by his Department and the value of compensation award in each of the past 10 years for which figures are available; what was the average value of claims settled at constant prices *(a)* prior to the repeal of the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987, *(b)* during ex-gratia period and *(c)* post repeal; and what estimates of the total annual payments post-repeal were made by Ministers during the passage of the Act through Parliament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Invalidity Pensions

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total annual pension paid to *(a)* a private and *(b)* a sergeant, with five years' service, invalided out of the services in 1945 with (i) 30 per cent. disability, (ii) 60 per cent. disability and (iii) 100 per cent. disability, respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

The table shows the current rates of war disability pension paid by the Department of Social Security.

Percentage disability	*Private weekly pension*	*Annual equivalent*	*Sergeant weekly pension*	*Annual equivalent*
Per cent.	£	£	£	£
30	25·47	1,328·00	25·57	1,333·22
60	50·94	2,656·00	51·14	2,666·44
100	84·90	4,426·69	85·24	4,444·41

In addition, there is a range of supplementary allowances which may be payable under the war pension scheme depending upon the circumstances of the individual case; such as unemployability supplement or allowance for lowered standard of occupation, constant attendance allowance, mobility supplement, age allowance, clothing allowance.

ENERGY

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what fees are to be paid to N. M. Rothschild in its capacity as adviser on the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Fees paid to Government advisers are commercially confidential. Total expenditure on coal privatisation will be reported to Parliament in the usual way through the publication of departmental estimates and the annual appropriation accounts.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what type of consultation is proposed with employees' organisations before firm plans are laid for the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No decisions about the form or timing of privatisation will be taken until after the election, when all interested parties, including employees and their representatives, will have an opportunity to express their views.

Sizewell B Power Station

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *424*, if he will make a further statement on the computer software system chosen for Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Following a comprehensive review of the difficulties encountered by Cegelec's P20 software system, Nuclear Electric has announced the award of a contract to Westinghouse who will provide a replacement software system for Sizewell B. The Westinghouse equipment is tried and tested, and is already used in PWRs in Europe and the United States of America.

Nuclear Electric has told us that they are confident that this action will keep the project on course for completion on the existing timetable.

Nuclear Installations (Security)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *383-84*, concerning the apprehension of two demonstrators at Sellafield, if he will now hold an inquiry into the practicality of fail-safe security at nuclear installations; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Security at all civil nuclear installations is kept under continuous review. It would not be in the public interest if the results of any inquiry into security were to be published.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 192**

SESSION 1990–91

3rd June—14th June 1991

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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